

Strategy and Sustainability 22045, autumn 2025

5 study points, period 1

"I'm a pessimist because of intelligence, but an optimist because of will."

— Antonio Gramsci

Course description

The course provides an introduction to the master's programme in international strategy and sustainability by exploring (1) current research on the intersection of strategy and sustainability at Hanken and elsewhere, and (2) inspirational examples of sustainable innovations found and narrated by the students. Various researchers engaging with questions related to strategy and sustainability will give the lectures. In a balancing act between pessimism and optimism, the course attempts to take sustainability challenges seriously, understand their complexity and 'wickedness', while at the same time exploring good examples of solutions.

The course is obligatory for students from the master's programme in International Strategy and Sustainability.

Course category

Course given entirely on location at Hanken, with recorded sessions when possible. The enrolment key for the course will be sent to all students registered for the course on Sisu on August 30. In addition, it will be shared during the introductory session on September 3.

Learning goal

You have knowledge on current topics and research in the field of strategic management and sustainability in business. You are acquainted with some of the faculty and their research in the department of management and organization. You have skills in academic research and writing in the fields of strategy and sustainability in preparation for your master's thesis.

After completing the course, you will be able to

- identify sustainability challenges in various economic, social, political, environmental, geographic, institutional, cultural and linguistic contexts
- recognize opportunities for organizations or entrepreneurs to integrate sustainability issues with their strategy
- appreciate innovative and/or transformative corporate action aiming to address one or several of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and create inspiring and engaging innovation stories through the medium of videos

International Learning Experience

The issues discussed in the course are international in nature. In addition, the course will rely on [Aim2Flourish](#), the world's first higher-education curriculum for the UN Sustainable Development Goals and "Business as an Agent of World Benefit", in relation to Hanken's championing of the UN

SDGs as a UNPRME Champion. More info on UN PRME-www.unprme.org and Hanken's PRME & PRME Champions journey: <https://www.hanken.fi/en/news/hanken-continues-prme-champion>.

Pre-requisites

The course is intended for students who wish to write a master's thesis on the topic of strategy and/or sustainability. The course is mainly research-driven and is particularly suitable for students interested in strategy and sustainability.

Total Student Workload

133 hours divided into

Teaching and contact hours: 20 h

Independent work of activities, readings, and assignments: 113 h

Instruction

Lectures and group cases (Aim2Flourish stories and presentations of videos).

Examiners Martin Fougère and Laura Varja (reflection papers).

Student feedback policy

All students are entitled to feedback on their assignments. However, due to limited resources there will not be systematic feedback to every student assignment. For this reason, when you would need to receive feedback, please request it by sending an e-mail to the examiner in charge of the assignment (laura.varja@hanken.fi for reflection papers or martin.fougere@hanken.fi for the other assignments).

Academic writing, plagiarism, and AI policy

When writing your reflections papers, please follow general academic conventions in terms of **carefully referencing and quoting your sources**. See <https://bit.ly/3R2T2lw> for the Hanken reference guide.

Plagiarism is the theft or use of someone else's work without proper acknowledgement, presenting the material as if it were one's own. Plagiarism is a serious academic offence equated with cheating in examinations, and the consequences are severe.

Plagiarised material may originate from any source. It is equally serious to use information from the internet as it is to use material from a printed source if it is not properly acknowledged. It is entirely acceptable to use quotations or data from work of others, but the source of the quotation or data should always be given. Failure to provide a source or put quotation marks around material that is taken from elsewhere gives the impression that the comments are original and one's own. When quoting word-for-word from the work of another person, quotation marks must be used. Sources used should be listed in full in a bibliography at the end of the piece of work.

For assignments in Moodle we use **Turnitin** (see turnitin.com) which checks for **plagiarism** and **AI use**. So there is really **nothing to gain (and much to lose) in copy and pasting without referencing**.

AI policy: For the written assignments, yellow traffic light in the Hanken system, that is, "students **can use generative AI as an assistant**. E.g, to organize ideas, improve clarity, or refine language, while still **being responsible for the core content**. AI tools may be used to support structuring, grammar checking, or even support programming. However, **students must report how AI was**

used...” (cf. <https://www.hanken.fi/en/faculty-staff/teaching-lab/guidelines-teaching/mode-teaching/ai-teaching-guidelines-examiners-and>). Concretely thus: If you use AI, you will have to:

- **Start by writing an entirely AI-free version of your assignments** where you produce **all the content without any AI help** – this version needs to fully address the questions and requirements of the assignment (such as engaging with the lecture material and the readings). In suspicious cases, the examiner will ask you to show the AI-free version of your work. If you cannot show that version when asked, you will fail the assignment.
- **Thoroughly report** (up to half a page) **on how exactly you used AI**, for what purposes, with what AI tool, with what prompts, for what parts of the text, etc.

For the **videos**, the voiceovers in your video (if any) should be one of your own voices and **any textual content** not clearly attributed to the interviewee(s) or another source **has to be your own**. In the pdf file you will submit for your video, you will have to include (1) the link to the video, (2) a specification of what part of what is said in the video is content created by you, and (3) a report specifying how exactly you used AI tools, detailing the different purposes, tools, prompts, and corresponding moments in the video.

Literature and course material

A number of academic articles (see below). The course material is to be found on Moodle.

Assessment

1. Individual **reflections papers** (DLs 17.9, 29.9, 10.10) 30%

Reflecting on the 6 academic lectures (each 5 points, 1 to 1.5 pages), 2 reflections at every one of the three deadlines.

Some specific **questions** for each session will be uploaded on Moodle (shortly after each session) and you will have to explicitly answer these questions in your reflections.

For each of the 6 lectures, students will be graded based on how they

- (1) answer the questions at hand in a thoughtful and reflective manner (beyond ‘I agree with the author/lecturer’), including a clear argumentation displaying an original way of thinking supported by reference to relevant sources from the course (and beyond, if that is useful)
- (2) through answering the questions, demonstrate an engagement with the lecture and lecture material (slides)
- (3) through answering the questions, demonstrate an engagement with the readings (by referring to them explicitly)

2. Text and digital videos on '**Aim2Flourish**' case (teamwork, DLs 5.10, 24.10) 40%

(note: you are expected to have produced a text and video to present by early October, and you have to submit that on Moodle by **7.10**; however, given the possible challenges of producing

something of high quality so quickly, the deadline for submission of your final version of story and video to Aim2Flourish is **25.10** – the grade will be based on this final version)

Text: 5 parts of 250 words, each worth 3 points (description, inspiration, impact, business benefits, societal/environmental benefits) + relevance 2 + overview 1 + reflection 2 = **20 points**

Video: grading the quality and clarity of (1) centrality claim, how well the importance and relevance are argued by you in your own voice; (2) the interview, how it is included in the video and designed as an appreciative inquiry; (3) the explicit takeaways by you in your own voice in the end of the video; and (4) the execution, including 'smoothness', use of extra material, creativity, etc. (each worth 5 points) = **20 points**

3. Own video **presentations and Q&A** (teamwork, presentations on 6.10 or 7.10) **10%**

Presentation 5 points (drawing the interest of audience before video), **Q&A 5 points** (addressing the questions well)

4. **Team preparation** for last session (**DL 14.10**) **10%**

You will need to work with your **teams** on a **preparatory paper**, please see separate document 'Team preparation for last session' (not the exact same instructions for all teams).

5. **Team performance** in last session (**15.10**) **5%**

6. Overall **peer grading** for teammates for all team activities; each individual grades their teammates (**DL 24.10**) **5%**

Sessions and deadlines

(0) 3.9, 12:30-14:00 Introduction to the course and 'Aim2Flourish' (Martin Fougère)

(1) 5.9, 14:15-15:45 Sustainability, win-win-wins and trade-offs (Martin Fougère) [SDGs 1-17]

(2) 12.9, 12:30-14:00 Introduction to strategy (Janne Tienari) [SDGs 8, 9, 17]

17.9: Deadline: reflections on lectures 1 and 2

(3) 19.9, 14:15-15:45 Sustainability as a strategic issue in large corporations (Laura Varja) [SDGs 1-17]

(4) 22.9, 10:15-11:45 Strategy and Sustainability all the way through: Policy, intermediaries, innovations (Martin Fougère, possible other speaker) [SDGs 1-17]

(5) 25.9, 16:00-17:30 Diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) as a strategic issue for businesses (Shadia Rask) [SDGs 5, 8, 10]

(6) 26.9, 14:15-15:45 The shift to virtual work from strategic and sustainability perspectives (Emma Nordbäck) [SDGs 3, 5, 7, 8, 10]

29.9: Deadline: reflections on lectures 3 and 4

5.10: Deadline for Aim2Flourish story and video submission on Moodle

(7a-b) 6.10 12:30-16:00 2 sessions Presentations of videos

(7c-d) 7.10 12:30-16:00 2 sessions Presentations of videos

10.10: Deadline: reflections on lectures 5 and 6

15.10: Deadline for team preparation for last session

(8) 16.10 12:30-15:45 Debates and course wrap-up

24.10: Deadline for final version of Aim2Flourish story and video (submitted to Aim2Flourish)

Readings (to be found through Hanken databases and/or Google Scholar / Researchgate / etc.)

For lecture (1) on Sustainability:

Bansal, P., & Song, H. C. (2017). Similar but not the same: Differentiating corporate sustainability from corporate responsibility. *Academy of Management Annals*, 11(1), 105-149.

Blythe, J., Silver, J., Evans, L., Armitage, D., Bennett, N. J., Moore, M. L., ... & Brown, K. (2018). The dark side of transformation: Latent risks in contemporary sustainability discourse. *Antipode*, 50(5), 1206-1223.

Feola, G. (2020). Capitalism in sustainability transitions research: Time for a critical turn?. *Environmental Innovation and Societal Transitions*, 35, 241-250.

For lecture (2) on Strategy:

Mantere, S., & Vaara, E. (2008). On the problem of participation in strategy: A critical discursive perspective. *Organization science*, 19(2), 341-358.

Mintzberg, H. (1994). The fall and rise of strategic planning. *Harvard business review*, 72(1), 107-114.

For lecture (3) on Sustainability as a company's strategic question:

Burritt, R.L., Christ, K.L., Rammal, H.G. et al. (2020). Multinational Enterprise Strategies for Addressing Sustainability: the Need for Consolidation. *Journal of Business Ethics* 164, 389–410.

Hahn, T., Figge, F., Pinkse, J. and Preuss, L. (2018) A paradox perspective on corporate sustainability: Descriptive, instrumental, and normative aspects. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 148, 235–248.

Maniora, J. (2018). Mismanagement of Sustainability: What Business Strategy Makes the Difference? Empirical Evidence from the USA. *Journal of Business Ethics* 152, 931–947.

For lecture (4) on Strategy and sustainability all the way down:

Mazzucato, M., Kattel, R. and Ryan-Collins, J. (2020) Challenge-driven innovation policy: Towards a new policy toolkit. *Journal of Industry, Competition and Trade* 20(2): 421-437.

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10842-019-00329-w>

Kattel, R. and Mazzucato, M. (2018) Mission-oriented innovation policy and dynamic capabilities in the public sector. *Industrial and Corporate Change*, 27(5): 787–801.

Toivonen T, Nordbäck E and Takala V (2018) Sparking Social Innovation: Evidence on Teams, Ideas and Incubation from Finland (An Evaluation Study of the National “Ratkaisu 100” Challenge Prize Competition by SITRA). Helsinki: SITRA. <https://www.sitra.fi/en/publications/sparking-social-innovation-challenge-prizes/>

For lecture (5) on Equality, diversity and inclusion as a strategic issue for businesses:

Acker, J. (2011). Theorizing Gender, Race, and Class in Organizations. In *Handbook of Gender, Work and Organization*, edited by Emma Jeanes, David Kinghts, and M. Patricia Yancey, 65–80. West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons.

Dobusch, L. (2021). The Inclusivity of Inclusion Approaches: A Relational Perspective on Inclusion and Exclusion in Organizations. *Gender, Work and Organization* 28 (1): 379–96.

Tyler, M., and Vachhani, S. (2021). Chasing Rainbows? A Recognition-Based Critique of Primark’s Precarious Commitment to Inclusion. *Organization* 28 (2): 247–65.

For lecture (6) on The shift to virtual work from strategic and sustainability perspectives:

Colbert, A., Yee, N., & George, G. (2016). The digital workforce and the workplace of the future. *Academy of Management Journal*, 59(3), 731-739.

Shreedhar, G. , Laffan, K., & Giurge, L. (2022). Is remote work actually better for the environment? *Harvard Business Review*. ISSN 0017-8012

Spreitzer, G., Porath, C. L., & Gibson, C. B. (2012). Toward human sustainability: How to enable more thriving at work. *Organizational Dynamics*, 41(2), 155–162.