



**HARVARD**  
Extension School



## **HARVARD UNIVERSITY EXTENSION SCHOOL**

### **ENVR E-153 SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN PRODUCT SUPPLY CHAINS FALL 2015 SYLLABUS & COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

WEDNESDAY - 5:30 PM TO 7:30 PM (SEPTEMBER 2<sup>ND</sup> - DECEMBER 16, NO CLASS  
NOVEMBER 25)

LOCATION: 1 STORY STREET 303

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The class can be attended in person in Cambridge, MA or livestream online via the course website. All class video recordings will be posted within 24 hours of the class meeting.

#### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

In recent years, the social impacts of products and trade have risen in the agendas of policy makers, investors and corporations. With a special focus on Supply Chains, this class provides a detailed background on Business and Human Rights, Social Responsibility, Corporate Sustainability Strategy and Social Life Cycle Assessment. We will cover both social responsibility (SR) issues and why they matter, and SR instruments and how they are applied. Students will experience processes and methods to identify supply chains' salient social impacts, and will become reflective about their strengths and weaknesses. Students will also become knowledgeable practitioners of Social Life Cycle Assessment, able to appropriately apply state-of-the-art Life Cycle Assessment software and Social LCA database. The class will also provide students the opportunity to explore various topics of interest, such as the challenge of indicator standardization, the weighting of positive and negative impacts, the utility of products to consumers, prioritization of impacts and the identification of improvement opportunities. Several guest lecturers will provide their perspective on the implementation of Social Life Cycle Assessment.

## **CONTENT OF THE COURSE**

This course seeks to enable participants to understand the context, history and scope of Social Responsibility and social compliance, and how social impacts can be assessed throughout business supply chains. Participants will become capable of conducting social life cycle assessment studies and reflective about current limitations, strengths, weaknesses, barriers and opportunities associated with the application of the methods in industry and policymaking.

We will discuss social and economic challenges, globalization and the importance to assess supply chain impacts in the context of a sustainability strategy. We will look at emerging US and global trends regarding standards, methods and application; and review the work of major sustainability initiatives.

We will also reflect on the broader question of creating positive changes in global supply chains and the role that conducting assessments can play in it.

Students will participate in small virtual work-groups that will attempt to identify the most important supply chain social impacts by replicating the process used by well-known multi-stakeholder initiatives.

Students will also conduct individually a Social LCA on a product category or purchase of their choice.

For content delivery the class will use readings, lectures, discussions, presentations by guest speakers, and at the conclusion of the course, presentations by students. Our class meets once per week. There will also be a series of hands-on computer software help sessions.

## **ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATION:**

In order for students to develop the abilities to both practice social sustainability supply chain assessment and be reflective about the practice, we will tackle two major assignments during the course and a class project.

The first assignment is a 250-word personal introduction. This intro will outline the student's main areas of interest, geographic location during the class semester and background with respect to supply chain social responsibility. This is a mandatory assignment, but will not be graded. Its purpose is to enable the instructor to organize assignments effectively. Students will also be invited to share these introductions with the class via the chat room. Since the course will be both on campus and online, we will put extra effort in making the class as convivial and personal as possible, for both learning contexts. Due Wednesday September 2nd, 2015.

The second assignment, to be carried out in small groups, consists in identifying product category main areas of impact, where each student will play the role of an expert,

representing a stakeholder group. This exercise replicates the process of impact identification used by well-known multi-stakeholder initiatives. Its purpose is to allow students to become familiar with this process and acquire practical knowledge of concepts such as materiality and sphere of influence. Each group will deliver a spreadsheet and word document summarizing their results and reflecting about the process.

The third assignment will provide students the opportunity to experience conducting a Social LCA on their own using life cycle assessment software and a Social LCA database. Students will also get to plan for and experience limited data collection activities. Finally the project will require students to reflect about the results and plan for the follow-up(s) and next phase(s) of the study (which will not be carried through). Each student will deliver a written report and presentation by the end of the term.

Our class project will be to identify each week the social impacts, economic sectors and geography of social issues identified in respected media. This will enable students to become familiar with useful social responsibility newsletters and enable our class to conduct a meta-analysis of the social issue coverage at the end of the semester. Each student will be assigned to cover one week and one or two data sources. The class will have a Google spreadsheet where the information will be compiled every week.

To help ensure that students are competent with the concepts, software and database required to conducting their term projects, weekly exercises will be assigned. These exercises will primarily include summarizing the week lecture, but will also involve students conducting some basic tasks with the software and database. Weekly exercises will be due by the beginning of class the following week.

Grades will be allocated as follows:

25% Class summaries and class project participation

30% Assignment Two: Group impact identification

45% Assignment Three: Presentation and Final Paper

\*30% for written report, 15% presentation

All assignments will be awarded a grade consistent with the following:

A+ 100-98	B+ 89-88	C+ 79-78	D 69-65	F 64
A 92-90	B 87-83	C 77-72		
A- 97-93	B- 82-80	C- 71-70		

**DUE DATES AND EXTENSIONS**

Assignments must be submitted via the E153 Canvas site unless otherwise specified (for class summaries and software tasks). We will not accept or grade work submitted by other means. Assignments are due before the beginning of class (5:30 PM EST) on the date indicated by the syllabus.

We greatly encourage students to submit their work on time. Extensions are available to students who become ill or have personal or family emergencies. If you have major life events that will make completing an assignment by the due date difficult (e.g. weddings, work travel without internet), you must make arrangements with your TA well in advance to receive full credit. Do not email your TA after the fact.

**REQUIRED TEXTS**

The textbook for the course is Richard Locke. 2013. The Promise and Limits of Private Power: Promoting Labor Standards in a Global Economy, Cambridge University Press. We will have some copies available for students at a location that will be confirmed.

We will also use the UNEP-SETAC Guidelines for Social LCA (2009). Available online: [http://www.unep.fr/shared/publications/pdf/DTIx1164xPA-guidelines\\_sLCA.pdf](http://www.unep.fr/shared/publications/pdf/DTIx1164xPA-guidelines_sLCA.pdf)

And the UNEP-SETAC methodological sheets for Social LCA (2013). Available online: [http://www.lifecycleinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/S-LCA\\_methodological\\_sheets\\_11.11.13.pdf](http://www.lifecycleinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/S-LCA_methodological_sheets_11.11.13.pdf).

**WEBSITES AND NEWSLETTERS**

- Business and Human Rights: <http://www.business-humanrights.org/>
- Impactt: <http://www.impacttlimited.com>
- Business Respect: <http://www.businessrespect.net>
- Guardian Supply Chains: <http://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/series/supply-chain>
- Social Hotspots Database: <http://www.socialhotspot.org>