University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Gies College of Business
WU Vienna University of Economics and Business

Managing for Tomorrow: Solving the Sustainability Puzzle
Vienna, May 20-30, 2025

Quick Facts

"Managing for Tomorrow: Solving the Sustainability Puzzle" is a short-term study program which is jointly organized by the **University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Gies College of Business, and WU Vienna University of Economics and Business**.

On the basis of insights into current and future challenges affecting businesses around the globe (including climate change, social exclusion, urbanization, technological revolution and geopolitical dynamics, etc.), students will analyze implications for business strategy, management and leadership. They will develop a sense of dealing with trade-offs in global business and learn to understand drivers for innovation and a sustainable transformation.

The program will take place **on site at WU Vienna** from **May 20-30, 2025,** for **bachelor students** from Gies College of Business, from WU Vienna and from selected international partner universities of the organizing institutions. The program is designed to be highly interactive, and a priority is placed on group discussion and international teamwork. The program includes online preparatory meetings.

Credits

Credits: 6 ECTS

Participants will receive a certificate upon successful completion of the program.

Dates

Application Deadline: December 15, 2024

Program Dates: May 20 to May 30, 2025
Recommended Arrival Date in Vienna: Monday, May 19 or Tuesday, May 20 early morning
Recommended Departure Date: Saturday, May 31

Mandatory Online Course Session: April 28, 2025

Voluntary Online Info Session: December 9, 2025, 18-19h (Vienna time)
https://wu-ac-at.zoom.us/j/66066054761?pwd=CWgceeID2VKiqYYsGSkl2sBD05DRzG.1
Meeting ID: 660 6605 4761
Code: 276989

All applicants will be informed of the results of their application at the beginning of January 2025.

Application Requirements

Application requirements are **current enrollment in a bachelor's program,** preferably in Business Administration, **excellent English language skills**, and **high motivation and interest** in academic work on the topic of sustainability.

Application Process

Applications are possible between November 25 and December 15, 2024. The application will take place via this website: https://short.wu.ac.at/managing-for-tomorrow

Additional Information

Students are expected to attend all sessions including working lunches and course excursions and are welcome to join all optional excursions (no fees). There is no tuition, students need to cover their travel and accommodation costs. Lunch is included on course days. All students are invited to a farewell dinner hosted by the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Gies College of Business.

Program Details
For detailed program information please see the course syllabus and the program itinerary on the following pages.
Contact Information
kirsten.mericka@wu.ac.at

Draft Syllabus:

Managing for Tomorrow: Solving the Sustainability Puzzle

WU Course Number: 5684 / 6 ECTS (3 UIUC credits)

Spring Semester 2025

Instructors: Alice Schmidt, Claudia Winkler
E-mail: claudia.winkler@goood.de

Class Day/Time: varies – please see schedule below
Classroom: varies – see WU Learn.

About the Course:

Managing for tomorrow requires future-proof solutions that are based on system-thinking. Businesses play a central role in determining whether our civilization – and by extension businesses themselves - will survive, or not. In the face of climate change, biodiversity loss and global social injustice, sustainability is not a secondary consideration but central to long-term business success. By harming the planet we harm our opportunities for business growth and success, as well as our health, happiness and wellbeing.

On the basis of insights into current and future challenges affecting businesses around the globe (including climate change, social exclusion, urbanization, technological revolution and geopolitical dynamics, etc.), students will analyze implications for business strategy, management and leadership. They will develop a sense of dealing with trade-offs in global business and learn to understand drivers for innovation and a sustainable transformation.

Learning Outcomes:

Students will learn to:

- Assess, structure and analyze complex global sustainability challenges and trade-offs in both the social and environmental domain that affect businesses in an interconnected world, including in emerging markets of low- and middle-income countries;
- Understand key challenges and opportunities in regard to climate action, a circular economy, social innovation, responsible consumption and technology, as well as core business functions, including stakeholder engagement, strategy development and supply chain management;
- Evaluate and apply key sustainability concepts to different industries and value chains, and evaluate how different companies are tackling sustainability challenges, including through partnerships with NGOs, governments, consumers and other stakeholders;
- Develop and train more broadly applicable skills, such as critical thinking; identification of research methods to address specific questions; gathering and filtering information; organising teamwork efficiently and effectively; structuring material in a coherent line of arguments; defending arguments orally and in writing; presenting in a focused and compelling way; and developing creative ideas to get the message across.

Teaching Methods:

A variety of didactic elements will be utilised to facilitate the successful completion of learning outcomes. This includes, but may not be limited, to the following:

- Lectures on theoretical concepts and practical examples
- Interactive discussions
- Student group work and presentations
- Case study analysis (individually and in groups)
- Simulation game (En-ROADS)
- Circular economy design sprint
- Audio-visual input analysis
- Other (e.g. recall exercises, stakeholder walk, learning diaries, mobile quiz, carbon footprint calculation, mini design sprint, elevator pitch, etc.)

While the format has a focus on participation and discussion, there is ample guidance and input by the lecturers in order to maximize learning outcomes for students.

Assessment:

Your progress in the class will be assessed across the following categories:

- Pre-course assignment: 25%
- Class participation and individual work packages: 35%
- Oral presentation of group project: 30%
- Written summary of group project: 10%
- Learning diary: 0%

Pre-course assignment (25%)

A written assignment will have to be submitted by 6 May 2025 to both lecturers via Canvas. It consists of two parts:

PART A: **Read the book "The Sustainability Puzzle" and answer the following questions:**

1. What are the three main insights you got from reading the book?
2. What surprised you? Did your perspective on one (or several) of the businesses mentioned in the book change? If so, how? If not, why not?
3. Why does sustainable transformation require systems thinking?
4. What else would you like to share or ask about sustainability?

PART A is expected to be **2-3 pages** long. Your answers will be marked on clarity and consistency of argument, suitability of the answer to the question, breadth and depth of analysis, clarity in terms of structure and format and in how you balance comprehensiveness with a focused and concise approach to answering the questions.

PART B: Select five papers from the core reading list and summarise them in one paragraph each; in a second paragraph add your key learnings from the paper in question, incl. any finding that surprised you.

Participation (35%)

Full attendance and active participation in class are necessary and expected components of your learning experience. You are allowed to miss class only in exceptional circumstances (e.g. in the case of illness). As attendance is mandatory, it does not count towards the participation grade. The latter is dependent on attentive listening, active engagement in class discussion, recall of relevant literature and topics discussed in class and additional, voluntary assignments (e.g. "elevator pitch"), that may be requested.

Oral Presentation (30%)

At the beginning of the course, students will be divided into diverse (in regard to gender and origin) working groups of approximately five individuals each. Each group will choose one company and investigate its strategy and approaches to sustainability, with a focus on the six puzzle pieces (climate action, circular economy, social justice, responsible consumption, sustainable business and technology). These case study companies may include companies that will be visited. Through coordination with the lecturers, each group will choose a different company. During the final session, groups will present their case study analysis and moderate a discussion in class. At the end, a winning presentation will be chosen by students and receive a small prize.

Written summary (10%)

Each group will summarize its case study analysis and findings in a short paper of about two pages.

Learning Diary (0%)

While this will not be part of the assessment, in order to complete the course and thus get a grade, students are required to keep a **learning diary** and email it to the lecturers on the day following the last day of the course. Key learnings should be summarized in bullet points with full sentences (0.5 – 1 pages max).

All files submitted electronically to Canvas must include the full name of the student and, where applicable, the number or name of the group.

Grading Scale:

The following grading scale will be used to determine your final course grade:

Grade	Points	Description
1/A	90 +	Exceptional, outstanding and excellent performance. Normally achieved by a minority of students who are highly engaged in the subject matter. These grades apply to a student who is self-initiating, exceeds expectations and has an insightful grasp of the subject matter.
2/B	80-89	Very good, good and solid performance. These grades indicate good engagement with and a good grasp of the subject matter or excellent grasp in one or more areas balanced with a satisfactory grasp in other areas.
3/C	70-79	Satisfactory. These grades indicate a satisfactory level of engagement, performance and knowledge of the subject matter.
4/D	60-69	Marginal Performance. A student receiving this grade demonstrated a superficial grasp of the subject matter.
5/Failed	59 and below	Unsatisfactory performance

Participation grade criteria:

The following criteria are used to determine your participation grade:

1 always well-prepared; always attentive and volunteers often; always makes the most of each activity; shows creativity and imagination; responds to and engages with classmates; remains critical; demonstrates good insight into core readings.

2 usually well-prepared; is attentive and regularly volunteers; makes the most of activities; completes exercises with imagination and resourcefulness.

3 prepared and attentive, but rarely volunteers and appears to lack concentration or effort; responds and completes exercises with basic imagination.

4 minimal active contributions in class; appears unprepared; when called upon by the teacher, makes some contribution but responds with minimum imagination or insight; does not engage beyond the minimum requirements for an assignment.

5 makes no contribution to class and often does not appear attentive; lacks concentration and effort in class; hardly ever tries to engage in class activity; but when called upon response shows no imagination or insight.

Writing task grade criteria:

1 The structure of the work is clear, logical and consistent; the arguments are clearly outlined; topic, goal or question of the text are clearly presented, justified and contextualized; the argumentation is conclusive, original and easy to understand design guidelines are followed; citation is consistent and corresponds to the citation rules; no major grammatical or spelling mistakes.

2 The structure of the work is reasonably clear, logical and consistently maintained; the arguments are clearly stated; the topic, goal and question of the text are clearly presented, justified and contextualized; there are some redundancies; the argumentation is conclusive and comprehensible; design guidelines are followed; citation is consistent and corresponds to citation rules; hardly any grammatical and spelling mistakes.

3 The structure of the work is mainly clear and understandable; the argument is clearly recognizable; there are redundancies and some argumentation gaps; design guidelines are largely complied with; the citation is inconsistent, sometimes incomplete; some grammatical and spelling mistakes that do not aggravate the general understanding, the topic, goal or question of the text are sufficiently justified and contextualised; the argumentation is mostly conclusive and understandable.

4 The essential parts of the task are available and completed; a consistent argumentation is recognizable; design guidelines are not adhered to in some parts; citation is incomplete and inconsistent; a larger number of Grammar or spelling mistakes make understanding difficult; the topic, goal or question of the text are only partially justified and

contextualised; the argument is often not conclusive and understandable.

5 Essential parts of the work are missing or inconclusive; an argument is missing or is not explained in a comprehensible manner; the topic, goal or question of the text is not sufficiently justified and contextualized; the argument is in essential parts incomprehensible; design guidelines are not complied with; there is little or no citation; a larger number of Grammar and spelling mistakes make understanding difficult.

Work Ethics & Academic Integrity:

In order to facilitate lively discussions during class and respect for everyone's time and commitment, note-taking by hand is recommended and use of laptops and mobile phones will be limited to group and individual work assignments as instructed by the lecturers.

In line with good academic practice, all papers and other written submissions must be the original work of the students, reflecting their own thoughts, research, and analysis. Plagiarism, including the use of automated algorithms or machine-generated text, is prohibited. It is imperative that students adhere to proper citation and referencing standards to acknowledge the contributions of others to their work.

Schedule

The course includes both online and offline sessions, as well as a number of excursions which, too, contain presentations or other typically in-class elements. Please note that the daily syllabus may be subject to change. Pay attention to in-class as well as e-mail announcements.

Date	Mode	Contents
28.4.	**Online**	**Business & society in a global context** 1. Introduction to and overview of the course 2. Zooming out: global sustainability challenges and opportunities 3. Key facts and figures 4. Concepts and definitions, incl. SDGs , ESG, etc. Link: TBD
21.5. AM	**Live**	**Climate action: joining the race towards 1.5 degrees C** 1. Climate and system dynamics: En-Roads world climate simulation 2. Greenwashing 3. Ørsted and Microsoft case studies 4. Systems thinking for sustainable development
22.5. AM	**Live**	**The Circular Economy** 1. Discussion of fast fashion 2. Introduction to circularity 3. Circular economy design sprint and business model development
22.5. PM	**Live**	**Excursion: Circular Food Production & Sustainable Urban Design** 1. Visit to blün 2. Introduction to sustainable urban development 3. Guided tour through Seestadt Aspern
23.5. AM	**Live**	**Playing fair in global value chains** 1. Sustainability issues in global value chains across industries 2. Visit to Dollar Street 3. Ferrero, Rio Tinto and Project Shakti case studies

26.5 AM	**Live**	**Sustainable business and responsible consumption** 1. The business case for sustainability 2. Regulation and certification 3. Sustainable consumption 4. The power of civil action
26.5. PM	**Live**	**Excursion: Social Innovation** 1. Introduction to social innovation 2. Visit to Caritas innovation hub 3. Visit Magda's Social Business Hotel
27.5. AM	**Live**	**Solving the puzzle through technology** 1. Technology & sustainability overview 2. Ethical technology (AI bias, etc.) 3. Mini design sprint climate tech
28.5 AM	**Live**	**Key Findings: Fast Forward into a sustainable transformation** 1. Reflection on key learnings 2. Systems change: the missing piece 3. A look into the future
28.5 PM	**Online**	**Project clinic** 1. Test & refine your presentations with the lecturers
30.5 PM	**Live**	**Solving the sustainability puzzle: group presentations** 1. Project presentation 2. Discussion moderated by groups 3. Voting

Required Materials:

The following reading materials will be provided and students are required to have read them before the first session.

- Davis, N.(2021),´Yeah,we´re spooked`: AI starting to have a big real world impact. Interview with Prof. Stuart Russell. Available online.
- Elkington, J. (2018). 25 Years Ago I Coined the Phrase "Triple Bottom Line." Here's Why It's Time to Rethink It. online.
- Greenpeace (2016). Timeout for fast fashion. Greenpeace Germany (Hamburg). Available online.
- Jones, N. (2018). The Information Factories. Nature, Vol 561. Available online.
- Mbe, V.S. (2021). A Conversation with Kate Raworth on Doughnut Economics and Redesigning our Economy. Available online.
- Neath, G. and Sharma, V. (2008). The Shakti Revolution – How the world's largest home-to-home operation is changing lives and stimulating economic activity in rural India. Development Outreach, June 2008. World Bank Institute. Available online.
- Prahalad, D. (2019). The new fortune at the bottom of the pyramid. Available online.
- Quelch, John A., and Margaret L. Rodriguez. Rana Plaza: Workplace Safety In Bangladesh (A) and (B). Harvard Business School Teaching Note 514-062, January 2014.
- Rio Tinto QIT Madagascar Minerals (2012). Sustainable Development Report 2012. Available online.
- Schmidt, A. and Winkler, C. (2021). The Sustainability Puzzle: How Systems Thinking, Circularity, Climate Action and Social Transformation can Improve Health, Wealth and Wellbeing for All. http://www.sustainability-puzzle.org
- Science-Based Targets Case Study: Ørsted. Available online.
- Specter, Michael (2015). Extreme City – The severe inequality of the Angolan oil boom. The New Yorker, June 2015. Available online.
- World Business Council for Sustainable Development (2016). Delivering on the Sustainable Development Goals: The inclusive business approach. WBCSD. Available online.

Draft Itinerary: Managing for Tomorrow: Solving the Sustainability Puzzle

May 20 – May 30, 2025, in Vienna

Monday, March 10	**18-19h (Vienna time)**: Mandatory online welcome session **for WU students**			
Wednesday, April 9	**9-10.30h (Vienna time: 16-17.30h)**: Mandatory online welcome pre-departure session **for Illinois students**			
Monday, April 28	**9-12h (Vienna time: 16-17h)**: Online course session: "Business & society in a global context" **for ALL**			
Tuesday, May 6	Pre-course assignment due **for ALL**			
ON SITE	**MORNING**	**LUNCH**	**AFTERNOON**	**EVENING**
Tuesday, May 20	**8.20h**: OS66 arrival Vienna & hotel check-in **for Illinois students** **12h**: Orientation and welcome meeting at WU **for ALL**	**13h:** Working lunch (WU Cafeteria)	**14.30h:** WU campus tour **15.30h:** Inner city tour **17.30h:** Group photo at Erzherzog-Carl-Denkmal, Heldenplatz	**18h:** Welcome dinner at Melker Stiftskeller **for Illinois students**
Wednesday, May 21	**9-12h:** Climate action: joining the race to 1.5 degrees C	**12h**: Working lunch (WU Cafeteria)	Individual project work in teams	

Please note: all information is subject to change!

Thursday, May 22	**9-12h**: The Circular Economy	**12h**: Working lunch (WU Cafeteria)	**13-18h**: Circular Food Production & Sustainable Urban Design: Excursion to blün and Seestadt Aspern	
Friday, May 23	**9-12h**: Playing fair in global value chains	**12h**: Working lunch (WU Cafeteria)	**14h**: Historical city walk and Wien Museum visit	
Saturday, May 24	**Day trip to Smart City Graz (Departure: 7h, Return: ~21h)** Visit the local company Insort GmbH, the leading provider of innovative sorting solutions for the food industry, explore the historic city center on a walking tour, learn about local sustainable initiatives, and slide down the Schlossberg with the tallest indoor slide worldwide!			
Sunday, May 25	**Raxalpe hike (Departure: 8h, Return: ~18h)** Lunch at mountain restaurant: CASH ONLY!			
Monday, May 26	**9-12h**: Sustainable business and responsible consumption	**12h**: Working lunch (WU Cafeteria)	**13.30-17h**: Social Innovation: Excursion to Caritas and Magdas Hotel	
Tuesday, May 27	**9-12h**: Solving the puzzle through technology	**12h**: Working lunch (WU Cafeteria)	**13.30-17h**: Sustainable Packaging: Excursion to Mondi Group	
Wednesday, May 28	**9-12h**: Key Findings: Fast Forward into a sustainable transformation	**12h**: Working lunch (WU Cafeteria)	"Project Clinic" online	**18h:** Transatlantic Stammtisch at Heuriger 10er Marie

Please note: all information is subject to change!

Thursday, May 29	**National holiday!**		Individual presentation preparation in teams	
Friday, May 30	**9-12h**: Solving the sustainability puzzle: group presentations	**12h**: Group photo + lunch (WU Cafeteria)	**13.30h**: Viennese Woods hike on Kahlenberg	**18h**: Farewell dinner at Heuriger Mayer am Pfarrplatz **for ALL**
Saturday, May 31	**Hotel check-out for Illinois students:** 7h bus departure (flight to Chicago ORD: 10.30h OS065)			

Please note: all information is subject to change!