Corporate Social Responsibility: Defining Models and Understanding Partnerships in Social Finance (PADM-GP 2127)

Instructor: Neil Britto (neil.britto@nyu.edu)

Class Date and Time: Tuesdays, 6:45pm – 8:25pm

Course Duration: 01/22/2018 – 05/07/2018

Office Hours: 6:00pm – 6:30pm, 8:30pm – 9:00pm in WAVE 370 on Tuesdays or by appointment

Course Location: WAVE Room 370

Course Description: Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is an evolving practice of organizations of varying size to integrate business activities with models that produce social and environmental outcomes. The course will rigorously explore the evolution and modalities of corporate social responsibility, with attention to cross-sector partnerships, the utility of social finance and its relationship with corporate responsibility, non-financial reporting, and other relevant trends. This course examines how CSR is currently practiced with particular consideration for interaction with government and the non-profit sector.

Through selected academic, practitioner and current news articles, lectures, case studies, guest presentations, written assignments, and facilitated discussion students will engage with relevant theory, and practice to better understand business’ role in addressing public problems.

Course Learning Objectives: Students who successfully complete this course will be able to:

- Identify and analyze key components of an organization’s CSR strategy
- Understand and explain the role of cross-sector collaboration in CSR, particularly in the financial services industry
- Critically and carefully discuss emergent trends and practices (e.g. cross-sector partnerships, social finance) relevant to the modalities of CSR
- Understand typical management challenges and opportunities relevant to a broad range of CSR issues involving government, business and the non-profit sector

Course Outline: Classes will include a lecture component, a brief break and facilitated discussion. Active, consistent class participation is encouraged throughout the course and there will be many opportunities in every class for students to participate. If students are unable to participate in a class, please provide advance notice. A review of session preparatory materials is expected for each class. These materials will reflect the interdisciplinary nature of the topic and diverse interests; including academic and practitioner-friendly publications, public and private manager resources, and consideration for current events.

Course Requirements: Class will begin promptly at 6:45pm. Regular attendance is expected with the understanding that occasional absences may occur. Students are expected to actively and thoughtfully participate in each session’s discussion questions. The syllabus includes a list of required preparatory reading to be completed prior to class. Assignments must be completed on time.
Grading and Assessment: This course will abide by the Wagner School’s general policy guidelines on incomplete grades, academic honesty, and plagiarism. It is the student’s responsibility to become familiar with these policies. All students are expected to pursue and meet the highest standards of academic excellence and integrity. Grading for the course will consist of:

- **Attendance, Informed Participation, and Class Contributions: (20 percent of grade)**
  - There are two components to the grade:

  - **Classroom Engagement (15 percent of grade)**
    - Consistent participation in class is expected of all students. Contributions to the class should reflect awareness of the readings and thoughtfulness.
    - Attendance is a necessary, but insufficient for an above average classroom engagement grade.
    - It’s understandable that on occasion students may not complete the readings or be able to attend class. Students should notify the instructor when they are expected to miss class.

  - **Reflective Presentation (5 percent of grade)**
    - Each student will deliver a 4-5 minute presentation that demonstrates knowledge gained through the class by answering one of three questions:
      - What is next for social finance in the U.S?
      - What is next for cross-sector collaboration in the U.S.?
      - What is next for CSR in the U.S?
    - This could include highlighting counterintuitive insights, posing key questions relevant to advancing thinking and practice, commenting on an important debate relevant to the topic, summarizing key recommendations in their final report, or providing other commentary that reflects an increased knowledge of the topic.
    - Additional information and guidance will be provided in class.

- **Mid-term assignment: Strategy Identification and Justification (30 percent of grade)**
  - By session seven, students are exposed to several primary modalities of CSR and various approaches to the design of CSR programs. In a 5-7 page double spaced essay, students will explore the following question: What are the best strategies for companies in X industry to help address public problems through CSR strategies? Students can choose any industry of interest. Essays should thoughtfully justify their answers, consider and evaluate counterpoints, comment on the role of partnerships, reference examples, highlight conditions that may influence the conclusion, and comment on how the strategy supports the management of organizational risks and value creation.
  - Additional information and guidance will be provided in class.
Final assignment: *Strategy Analysis and Recommendation Paper* (50 percent of grade)

- Students will select a publicly traded corporation, analyze their existing CSR strategy, and make recommendations for improvement in the form of a properly cited memo. The analysis should reflect knowledge of lecture content, class discussions, and readings. The paper should identify key strategies, articulate challenges and opportunities, demonstrate comprehension of company’s approach, and recommend improvements and refinements to the strategy.
- Students must submit the company they wish to evaluate by March 27th. Only one student can choose a company.
- The 7-10 double-spaced submission must meet the standards expected of thoughtful graduate students: a well-reasoned analysis, systematically organized, methodologically sophisticated, and reader-friendly structure is recommended.
- Additional information will be provided in class.

**Academic Integrity:** As permitted under New York University by-laws and disciplinary procedures, the faculty of the Wagner Graduate School of Public Service adopts procedures for informal resolution of complaints and for cases of formal student discipline. The procedures described in the Academic Oath.

**Students with Disabilities:** New York University is committed to providing equal educational opportunity and participation for students with disabilities. It is the University’s policy that no qualified student with a disability be excluded from participating in any University program or activity, denied the benefits of any University program or activity, or otherwise subjected to discrimination with regard to any University program or activity. More on the Disability Policy can be found here.
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Detailed Class Descriptions: The following section describes each session’s core components and the materials required to prepare for class discussion.

Class 1: January 23rd 2018
The Evolution of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

- Detailed review of course syllabus, assignments, learning objectives and expectations
- Articulate personal learning objectives and discuss initial impressions of CSR
- Review corporate social responsibility’s recent history, evolution, and related concepts

Class Preparation Materials:

Class 2: January 30th 2018
The Current Landscape: An Introduction to Key CSR Modalities & Strategies

- Analyze and identify the case for CSR for different types of organizations
- Understand the spectrum of programming and strategies relevant to corporate social responsibility
- Engage with relevant frameworks and apply them to case examples of CSR

Class Preparation Materials:

Class 3: February 6th 2018
Industry, Geographic, and Political Considerations for Practice

- Investigate how CSR programming differs across issue areas and industries
- Review relevant factors for CSR in local, state, regional, national and international contexts and assess the implications for management
- Explore how public policy and international agreements influence key modalities of CSR

Class Preparation Materials:


NOTE: The Methodological: Technical Aspects section is not necessary to review.

Class 4: February 13th 2018
Challenges and Limitations to Corporate Social Responsibility

- Review critiques of corporate social responsibility
- Discuss the types of common organization problems and challenges to CSR
- Identify and discuss micro and macro factors that influence an organization’s ability to design and implement a CSR program

Class Preparation Materials:


Class 5: February 20th 2018
An Introduction to Cross-sector Partnerships

- Review taxonomies and typologies of government, business, non-profit sector partnerships
- Discuss management practices relevant to cross-sector partnership
- Review opportunities and challenges for cross-sector collaboration

Class Preparation Materials:

- Gray, B., & Stites, J.P. 2013. Sustainability through partnerships: Capitalizing on collaboration (Rep.). Network for Business Sustainability
Class 6: February 27th 2018
The Financial Services Industry and CSR: From Traditional Philanthropy to Social Finance

- Review historical practices and current trends of the financial services industry and foundations relevant to CSR
- Discuss how cross-sector partnerships have been used through social finance strategies
- Introduction to specific applications of social finance relevant to corporate social responsibility.

Class Preparation Materials:

- **Case Study:** Citigroup. (2015). *2015 Citi global citizenship report* (Rep.). Citigroup. NOTE: Familiarity with the key structure and components of the CSR report is essential.

  - Note: Please prioritize pages 16-40 of the report.


Class 7: March 6th 2018
The Concept, Practice and Proliferation of Responsible Investment and Social Finance

- Preliminary class evaluation
- Introduction to the concept of social finance, examples, and its connection to CSR.
- An overview of models, metrics, strategies and management practices relevant to social finance.

Class Preparation Materials:


  - NOTE: Please prioritize familiarizing yourself with the “How it Works” section.


Class 8: March 20th 2018
Indicating Impact I: Metrics, Evaluation and Quantification Efforts

- Midterm assignment submitted at the start of class
- Discuss recent trends in CSR measurement, relevant techniques and standards.
- Explore the opportunities and challenges with measurement and quantification of CSR.

Class Preparation Materials:


Class 9: March 27th 2018
Indicating Impact II: Rankings and Reporting Non-Financial Performance

- An introduction to relevant measurement and reporting initiatives
- Review reputable and frequently used methods and tools
- Discuss the limitations and the next frontier for measurement methodology

Class Preparation Materials:

  o NOTE: A review of pages 2-37 is sufficient.
- RobecoSAM. (2016). DJSI 2016 review results [PowerPoint Slides]
Class 10: April 3rd 2018
Management Experiences in Corporate Social Responsibility and Cross-sector Partnerships

- Submit company name for final assignment
- Discuss typical processes, protocols, opportunities and challenges
- Discuss the design, implementation and evaluation of CSR programs
- Review common managerial and leadership problems relevant to CSR

Class Preparation Materials:
- Case study TBD / Guest lecturer materials.
  - NOTE: A review of pages 74-86 is adequate

Class 11: April 10th 2018
Public Sector Perspectives and Engagement

- Explore the factors that influence public sector engagement with CSR
- Explore how public policy and international agreements influence key modalities of CSR
- Examine how city and national governments interact with industry and company specific CSR programs.

Class Preparation Materials:
  - NOTE: A review of pages 16-40 is adequate

Class 12: April 17th 2018
Non-Profit Sector Perspectives and Engagement

- Explore the different mechanisms influential on non-profit sector involvement in CSR
- Discuss the implications of cross-sector partnerships, particularly business NGO relationships for the future of the non-profit sector
- Discuss management practices within the non-profit sector for working with companies
Guest Presentation: Shahreen Reza – Experiences with CSR programs from a non-profit organization perspective

Class Preparation Materials:


Class 13: April 24th 2018
The Future of Corporate Responsibility and Cross-sector Partnerships

- Explore the role of thought leadership and convening in influencing the CSR agenda for public and private organizations
- Discuss the benefits and challenges of initiatives that assemble public and private interests.
- Identify and analyze local, state, national, and international initiatives influencing CSR
- Discuss future possibilities for social finance, cross-sector partnerships, and CSR

Class Preparation Materials:


  - A review of pages 5-38 is adequate.

Class 14: May 1st 2018
Advance Thinking and Practice: Next Steps for the Field

- Reflective presentations
- Discuss the prospects and perils for cross-sector partnerships in public problem solving