

Course title:	Sustainable Business: Strategy & Innovation
Instructor:	Oliver Schmidt
Email address:	oliver.schmidt@fu-berlin.de
Track:	B-Track
Language of instruction:	English
Contact hours:	48 (6 per day)
ECTS-Credits:	6
Prerequisites:	Students should be able to speak and read English at the upper intermediate level (B2) or higher.

Course description

Climate change, environmental pollution, waste of resources and the decline of biodiversity clearly show mankind that processes of change are necessary. On a policy level, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris climate agreement and the Green New Deal are setting the stage, at the corporate level, standards such as environmental social and governance (ESG) reporting, supply chain integrity and voluntary certification, and diversity are critical to long-term business success.

How are companies innovating towards more sustainability today? What are the criteria, the success factors and the strategic approaches to tackle consumer, policy, employee and societal demand for more sustainability?

This course will look at current sustainability frameworks, sustainable companies and sustainable innovation. The participants will get to know and to apply collaborative tools to be better prepared for a business environment. One focus will be on the development of a sustainable business model or project, based on which we will learn and try out modern methods such as the Sustainable Business Canvas, Design Thinking, Effectuation and the Blue Ocean Strategy.

Student profile

Students interested in evaluating and creating business-related sustainability strategies that are relevant for future business development and leadership positions, entrepreneurs, sustainability consultants, NGO- and policy-related careers, and policy in general and public debates.

Prerequisites

Basic interest and curiosity in sustainability and in getting to know or working with businesses to improve the world.

Please note that students need to bring their own laptop to class for this course.

Course requirements

1. Regular attendance and active participation in class.
2. Group presentation in class (about 30 minutes) on a project of the course.
3. Final Exam with questions on the course project and the course contents.

Required language skills

The language of instruction is English. Language proficiency on an advanced intermediate level (B2) is a prerequisite for participation. For orientation purposes, you can assess your language skills here (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR): <https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=090000168045bb52>)

Attendance

Each class consists of six teaching modules (45 minutes each). If you miss 6 modules (unexcused), your final course grade will drop by one grade. Coming more than 20 minutes late counts as one missed module (this also applies to excursion days). If you come late to class six times (up to 20 minutes) your entire course grade will also drop by one grade. If you miss 14 modules or more (unexcused), you will fail the class. Excused absences, such as those with medical documentation, do not count toward these totals.

Grading

Class Participation:	30%
Presentation:	40% (learning groups)
Exam:	30% (individual)

Class Participation means regular, active participation.

The presentation will be a presentation on a project of the course students will prepare in a small learning group. It will provide a useful opportunity for cohort cooperation and feedback. The final exam will include questions on the course project and the course contents.

Readings

A digital course reader will be provided.

Steffen, W., Richardson, K., Rockström, J., et al. (2015). Planetary boundaries: Guiding human development on a changing planet. *Science*, 347(6223), 736–746.

Raworth, K. (2012). A safe and just space for humanity: Can we live within the doughnut? *Oxfam Discussion Papers*. Oxford: Oxfam.

Schoneveld, G. (2020) Sustainable business models for inclusive growth: Towards a conceptual foundation of inclusive business, *Journal of Cleaner Production* Volume 277, 20 December 2020, 124062

Geissdoerfer M et al., (2020), Circular business models: A review, *Journal of Cleaner Production* Volume 277, 20 December 2020, 123741

Sarasvathy, S. D. (2001). Causation and Effectuation: Toward A Theoretical Shift from Economic Inevitability to Entrepreneurial Contingency. *The Academy of Management Review* 26(2).

Course schedule

Date	Program*
Tuesday, July 21, 2026	Course basics Introduction to sustainability, green & circular economy Sustainability frameworks and operationalization
Friday, July 24, 2026	Corporate Social Responsibility & business sustainability strategy. How do we understand the political and social framework, and how does a business model emerge?
Tuesday, July 28, 2026	Entrepreneurship, Social entrepreneurship and Sustainability-oriented Business Model Development. How does dealing with stakeholder demands help us develop a business strategy?
Friday, July 31, 2026	Field Trip: Green Tour We will drive through Berlin's center (Mitte, Kreuzberg, Schöneberg, Neukölln), visit green places and companies, and have the opportunity to exchange ideas with employees and leaders.
Tuesday, August 4, 2026	Management methods for dealing with uncertainty. Design Thinking and principles of innovation. What are the differences between management methods and which are suitable for which challenge?
Friday, August 7, 2026	Field Trip: Profund Innovation, the service institution for knowledge and technology transfer within the research division of Freie Universität Berlin. We will meet startups of green and social industries and have the opportunity to address our questions to them.
Tuesday, August 11, 2026	Presentation of sustainable business model and strategies
Friday, August 14, 2026	Final Exam FUBiS Farewell Ceremony

*Field trips are subject to change depending on the availability of appointments and speakers. On field trip days, class hours may be adjusted.