NUTR 278: Corporate Social Responsibility in the Food Industry  
Spring 2024

Class Meetings: Mondays 10:45 - 1:15 pm Eastern Standard Time in Jaharis 105

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Sean B. Cash | sean.cash@tufts.edu | Jaharis 127

Office Hours: Nicole: Wednesdays 2:30-3:30pm in Jaharis 126; Fridays 12-1pm on Zoom:  
https://tufts.zoom.us/my/ntblacktone  
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Teaching Asst: Emily Stanislawzyk | emily.stanislawzyk@tufts.edu

TA Office Hours: Mondays, 9:15–10:15am; Jaharis Student Lounge

Semester Hour Units: 3 SHUs

Prerequisites: Graduate standing or instructor approval

Course Description: The role of the corporation in achieving societal goals is controversial and has evolved over time. The food industry in particular has the potential to impact human health, food access, ecological sustainability, working conditions, and community well-being. This course will provide students with an overview of prevailing theories of the social responsibilities of corporations; how CSR activities may benefit food businesses; how businesses can conduct, monitor, and measure the impacts of CSR practices; how consumers respond to these efforts; and emerging topics relevant to CSR in the food industry. We will draw upon academic research, case studies, and insights from current professionals to illustrate these concepts.

Course Goals: The overarching goal for this course is for students to understand the theory and practice of corporate social responsibility as it applies to the food industry. Students will:

1. Learn about different theories and tools of CSR, as well as their strengths and weaknesses
2. Understand how to communicate basic business and sustainability concepts critical for CSR
3. Understand why, how, and what food businesses commonly measure to assess the social responsibility of their activities
4. Learn how firms in the food industry communicate CSR practices to different groups of stakeholders

Additional required readings and content will be posted to the Canvas course site (https://canvas.tufts.edu). This includes a link to purchase a small set of Harvard Business Review cases we will use in class.

Academic Conduct
You are responsible for upholding the highest standards of academic integrity, as specified in the Friedman School's Policies and Procedures Handbook located at this web page: https://nutrition.tufts.edu/about/policies-and-procedures, as well as Tufts University's policies (https://students.tufts.edu/community-standards/support-resources/academic-integrity-resources). This includes understanding and avoiding plagiarism, which is defined as the unacknowledged use of someone else’s published or unpublished work. It is the responsibility of each student to understand and comply with academic integrity standards, as violations will be sanctioned by penalties ranging from failure on an assignment and the course to dismissal from the school.
The material you submit to show mastery of the course material must be your own work. We take proper academic conduct seriously, as it is unfair to other students when academic misconduct is not addressed. Passing grades will never be awarded on assignments that were completed through academic misconduct.

**Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy**

In this course, you may use generative AI tools for your learning, just as you can collaborate with your peers for things such as brainstorming, getting feedback, revising, or editing of your own work. However, you may not submit any work generated by an AI platform as your own; this is a violation of Tufts’ academic integrity standards (see link above). To help guide you in the use of AI in this course – consider the following guidelines:

1. Familiarize yourself with AI tools, including that: Bias is embedded in the creation and in the output of these systems; you may encounter harmful language and ideas. AI platforms can produce inaccurate or false information with confidence (so called hallucinations, e.g., it frequently invents false references). Text from AI may closely mimic human knowledge, understanding, and even human emotions. When you create an account, the companies who own these tools often retain the rights to use your information and the content shared with them in a variety of ways.
2. Cite all AI tools when used or referred to in assigned work. See How to Cite ChatGPT from the APA & How to Cite Generative AI from the MLA.
3. Identify the way it contributed to your work. For example, you can include a statement that you asked an AI to “identify any grammatical or spelling errors” in your writing, or you used it to get started in thinking about topics for your paper. Any statement directly generated by an AI system should be in quotes.
4. If you have questions, please ask us.

**Our Teaching-Learning Philosophy, and What That Means for You**

We strive to take a learner-centered approach with this course (Weimer, 2013). Based on a growing body of evidence, educational theory, and our own values, we believe the following:

1. Actively engaging with content, rather than passively receiving it, is critical for learning and long-term retention. Therefore, we will use a combination of interactive lecture, discussions, and other activities as the foundation of our time in this classroom. Reading or watching the assigned materials before each class will be important for you to be able to fully participate and get the most out of our time together.
2. Our role as instructors is to guide or facilitate your learning. Being a facilitator means relinquishing some of the power traditionally held by a professor to create a more equitable, collaborative, and dynamic learning environment. It means designing structures that allow you to learn from one another- our first response to a question may not be to answer it!
3. Each of us brings different expertise, experiences, identities, and perspectives to this course. This diversity is inherently valuable and also essential to deepening our individual and collective knowledge.
4. One of the most powerful ways one can learn is by teaching others. We hope you will take advantage of that opportunity when it arises.

As we go through the semester, your suggestions on how we can better support your learning or improve the classroom environment are encouraged and appreciated.

**Assessment and Grading**

Your grade in this class will be determined by a final strategy briefing, teach back, reading responses, and your engagement and professionalism in the course. Points will be awarded for each assignment, and an overall course score will be calculated from the weights given below.

Grading for the course will be based on the distribution below:
Reading responses: 40% of your grade will be based on five responses to course readings. Three of these will be analyses of assigned case studies, and two of these will be reflective essays in response to the week’s assigned readings. The specific due dates are listed in the “at a glance” course outline below. A rubric is available for these responses under each assignment on Canvas. All other weeks, students will submit brief bullet-point responses to assigned discussion prompt questions. The responses to these questions will be used by your instructors to guide that week’s discussion. These responses are not graded, but will count as contribution toward engagement and professionalism (described further below). You may not use generative AI tools to prepare these ungraded assignments.

Teach-back: 25% of your grade will be based on your preparing and presenting a 15-minute “teach-back” in which you apply the tools and concepts learned in the previous section of the course to a current CSR issue in the food sector; 15% of the semester grade will be based on the presentation itself, and an additional 10% will be based on a one-page briefing to be distributed to your classmates. Each student will be assigned a slot in which to present. Additional details will be discussed the first day of class. Rubrics are available for the one pager and presentation in the assignments tool on Canvas.

Final strategy briefing 20%: You will be developing a CSR strategy recommendation for a food business that we engage with in the course, either through case studies or guest lectures. Your strategy briefing will be a slide stack and voice memo making a recommendation to the company’s Board of Directors. This assignment will be due at end of the semester, and a rubric is available for it in the assignments tool on Canvas.

Engagement and professionalism: Regular attendance in class is a necessary (but not sufficient!) condition for mastering this material. 15% of your grade will be based on your engagement in class discussion, preparation of responses to reading prompts as described in “reading responses” above; contributions to CSR in the News (below); being an active listener; and being prepared for class.

CSR in the News: The field of CSR is everchanging. As such, each class period we will take 10-15 minutes to discuss current events in the CSR world. Contributing during this segment of class will be part of your in-class discussion grade.

Grading Range
Your course score will then be mapped into a letter grade on the basis of “natural breaks” in the distribution of class grades. Please note that these breaks may be used to raise, but never lower, grades from a standard grade distribution (e.g., 90% will always be at least an A-).

Instructions for Submission of Assignments
All assignments are due on Canvas at 11:59 pm on the Sunday before each class, unless otherwise noted in the schedule below.

Penalties for late or incomplete assignments: No late assignments will be accepted and a zero grade will be recorded for missing work. If you think you may have difficulty completing an assignment on time for any reason, please ask us for an extension as early as possible. No extensions will be granted fewer than 24 hours before an assignment is due other than in an emergency; in case of an emergency, please notify us as soon as possible. We will try to accommodate busy schedules, but not poor planning.
On-Campus Attendance & Tufts Zoom
Class meetings will be held in-person. Zoom will not be used for attending or recording class unless inclement weather or disease transmission circumstances require us to move online. In this event a Zoom link will be provided, and class will be held virtually. If you are not feeling well, please do not come to campus. Please contact the teaching team before the class period to discuss alternative arrangements.

Accommodation of Disabilities
We will do our best to ensure each of you has the resources you need to succeed. Tufts University is committed to providing equal access and support to all students through the provision of reasonable accommodations so that each student may access their curricula and achieve their personal and academic potential. If you have a disability that requires reasonable accommodations please contact Matthew Hast, the Friedman School Assistant Dean of Student Affairs at 617-636-6719 or matthew.hast@tufts.edu to make arrangements for determination of appropriate accommodations. Please be aware that accommodations cannot be enacted retroactively, making timeliness a critical aspect for their provision.

Course Topics and Assignment Schedule at a Glance (assignments are due the Friday before class unless otherwise noted)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEEK</th>
<th>DATE OF CLASS</th>
<th>COURSE TOPIC</th>
<th>INSTRUCTOR</th>
<th>ASSIGNMENTS DUE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>January 22</td>
<td>Introduction to course and CSR, Key concepts and definitions</td>
<td>Blackstone &amp; Cash</td>
<td>Read the syllabus (ungraded)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>January 29</td>
<td>Theories of CSR</td>
<td>Blackstone</td>
<td>Reading Response #1: Reflective essay</td>
</tr>
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<td>3</td>
<td>February 5</td>
<td>The business case for CSR</td>
<td>Cash</td>
<td>Reading prompt responses (ungraded)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>February 12</td>
<td>CSR in practice: the good, the bad, the (potentially) ugly</td>
<td>Cash; Guest speaker: Nako Kobayashi (Ceres)</td>
<td>Reading Response #2: Case study analysis</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>February 22</td>
<td>Student Teach-backs</td>
<td>Student block A</td>
<td>Teach-back slides and one-pager (presenting groups)</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>February 26</td>
<td>Introduction to sustainability metrics, measurement, and reporting</td>
<td>Blackstone; Guest speaker: Christina Skonberg (Simple Mills)</td>
<td>Reading prompt responses (ungraded)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>March 4</td>
<td>Life cycle assessment (LCA) and footprinting</td>
<td>Blackstone; Guest speaker: Kate Schaffner (Mars Royal Canin)</td>
<td>Reading Response #3: Reflective essay</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>March 11</td>
<td>Social LCA and human rights due diligence in supply chains</td>
<td>Blackstone; Guest speaker: Miguel Freitas (Danone)</td>
<td>Reading prompt responses (ungraded)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>March 16 - 24</td>
<td>SPRING BREAK</td>
<td></td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>March 25</td>
<td>Student Teach-backs</td>
<td>Student block B</td>
<td>Teach-back slides and one-pager (presenting groups)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>April 1</td>
<td>Certifications, Verifications, and Labeling</td>
<td>Cash; Guest speaker: Amaru Sanchez (Wiley Rein)</td>
<td>Reading Response #4: Case study analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>April 8</td>
<td>Consumer behavior and CSR</td>
<td>Cash;</td>
<td>Reading prompt responses (ungraded);</td>
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Detailed Course Schedule

Note: Please refer to Canvas for the most up to date list of readings, topics and due dates.

**Week 1:** Introduction to Course and CSR; Key Concepts and Definitions

**Learning Objectives:**
1. Define corporate social responsibility and sustainability in a business context
2. Describe common arguments for CSR

**Required Reading/Assignments:**
- Chandler Chapter 1: What is CSR?
- Chandler Newsletter: Strategic CSR Economics, November 19, 2019

**Assignments Due:**
- Read the syllabus

**Week 2:** Theories of CSR

**Learning Objectives:**
1. Describe competing conceptualizations of the function of CSR (diversity of starting points/motivations)
2. Describe common critiques of CSR
3. Describe which stakeholders are prioritized according to different views on the role of business in society

**Required Readings/Assignments:**
- Chandler Chapter 3: Stakeholder theory
- Chandler Chapter 6: Who owns the firm?
- Jigsaw reading assignment

This schedule is subject to modification at the instructors’ discretion.

Recommended Readings:

Assignments Due:
- Reading Response #1: Reflective essay

Week 3: The Business Case for CSR

Learning Objectives:
1. Describe the business case for CSR
2. Define mission, vision, tactics, and strategy
3. Define and critique the concept of “shared value”

Required Readings/Assignments:
- Chandler Chapter 9: Strategy + CSR (p. 250-252 only) + Chandler Chapter 10: Strategic CSR

Recommended Readings:
- Chandler Chapter 12: Sustainable Value Creation

Assignments Due:
- Reading prompt responses (ungraded)
Week 4: CSR in Practice: the Good, the Bad, the (Potentially Ugly)

Learning Objectives:
1. Describe how CSR fits in to different operations of a food enterprise
2. Identify common “pain points” for implementation of CSR within a firm
3. Identify the role of investors in initiating and supporting CSR initiatives

Required Readings/Assignments:
- HBR Case, Frito Lay Net Zero Chip
- Pre-reads for guest lecture: TBD

Recommended Readings:

Assignments Due:
- Reading Response #2: Case study analysis

Week 5: Student Teach-backs

Required Readings/Assignments:
- None

Assignments Due:
- Teach-back slides and one-pager (presenting groups)

Week 6: Introduction to Sustainability Metrics, Measurement, and Reporting

Learning Objectives:
1. Describe commonly applied CSR metrics, indicators, and targets
2. Describe why and how a company might prioritize particular sustainability metrics, using the concept of materiality
3. Identify reporting frameworks commonly used in the food industry to document CSR practices and outcomes

Required Readings/Assignments:
- Chandler Chapter 8: Compliance and Accountability (p. 203-222 only)
- Global Reporting Initiative. (2013). *Materiality: what topics should organizations include in their reports?* (linked in Week 6 Readings on Canvas)
- The GRI Sustainability Reporting Standards: The Future of Reporting (approx. 3 minutes): [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AGqE400_7g&list=PLqkvnJU0Llk4pu0KPqlc4flcecUtsao](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AGqE400_7g&list=PLqkvnJU0Llk4pu0KPqlc4flcecUtsao)
  o Materiality (p. 4-6)
  o GRI Index (p. 66-70)
  o UNGC Index (p. 71)
  o UN SDG Index (p. 7)
  o SASB Index (p. 72)

Recommended Readings:
• HBR Case: Danone: Adopting Integrated Reporting or Not?

Assignments Due:
• Reading prompt responses (ungraded)

Week 7: Measuring Sustainability: Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) and Footprinting

Learning Objectives:
1. Define life cycle thinking, life cycle assessment, and life cycle management
2. Compare and contrast the concept of a life cycle with the footprinting scopes (1,2,3) of the GHG Protocol
3. Describe how LCA can be used by companies to improve sustainability and make external claims

Required Readings/Assignments:
• UNEP-SETAC. (2009). Life Cycle Management: How business uses it to decrease footprint, create opportunities and make value chains more sustainable.

Recommended Reading:
• WRI and WBSCD. (nd). GHG Protocol Corporate Accounting and Reporting Standard.
• WRI and WBSCD. (nd). Corporate Value Chain (Scope 3) Accounting and Reporting Standard.

Assignments Due:
• Reading Response #3: Reflective essay
Week 8: Social LCA and Human Rights Due Diligence in Supply Chains

Learning Objectives:
1. Describe social life cycle assessment
2. Identify key human rights and other social issues in food supply chains
3. Describe the challenges of identifying, measuring, and reporting on social issues in supply chains

Required Readings/Assignments:

Recommended Readings:

Assignments Due:
- Reading prompt responses (ungraded)

Week 9: Student Teach-backs

Required Readings/Assignments:
- None

Assignments Due:
- Teach-back slides and one-pager (presenting groups)

Week 10: Certifications, Verifications, Labeling, Ratings & Rankings

Learning Objectives:
1. Describe the problem that certification schemes are designed to overcome
2. Identify key aspects of successful certification and verification schemes

Required Readings/Assignments:
- Chandler Chapter 8: Compliance and Accountability (p. 214-221 only)
- Case: New Belgium Brewing and B Company Certification

Recommended Readings:

**Assignments Due:**
- Reading Response #4: Case study analysis

**Week 11: Consumer Behavior and CSR**

**Learning Objectives:**
1. Understand the basic theories and principles of consumer psychology used to market food products to consumers, including models of market segmentation, consumer perception, and consumer decision-making
2. Apply these models and principles of consumer psychology to understand how food companies market socially responsible food products to consumers

**Required Readings/Assignments:**

**Recommended Readings:**
- TBD

**Assignments Due:**
- Reading prompt responses (ungraded)
- Final project scenario selection

**Week 12: Student Teach-backs**

**Required Readings/Assignments:**
- None

**Assignments Due:**
- Teach-back slides and one-pager (presenting groups)

**Week 13: Marketing Sustainability, Greenwashing, and Puffery**

**Learning Objectives:**
1. Describe key concepts in consumer and producer behavior as they relate to the potential for success of market-based approaches
2. Explain how efforts to market socially responsible products can backfire on producers
3. Describe examples of how unscrupulous producers have used false or overstated claims to promote their products

Required Readings/Assignments:

Recommended Readings:

Assignments Due:
- Reading Response #5: Case study analysis

Final Strategy Briefing due Sunday, May 5 11:59 pm