

The Triple Bottom Line and Organizational Effectiveness

What does it mean to be effective? How do we measure success? Who should be influencing business strategy? How should organizations be managed so that the interests of all are served? These are some of the fundamental questions that leaders and managers face when navigating their organization's path to effectiveness. However, the answers to these questions are often complex and can vary based on who is asking the question.

One of the major assumptions we have about business is that economic performance is the most important measure of success. However, the triple bottom line approach enables us to consider the social (people) and environmental (planet) performance of business along with traditional economic concerns (profit). In addition, it allows us to identify the various individuals and groups who impact and are impacted by an organization's activities; and determine whose interests should be taken into account when developing and/or implementing a policy or program.

This course will provide an introduction to understanding the environment of business through an examination of the triple bottom line and analysis of stakeholder interests in each of these three domains. This course will use current business cases to explore these issues in a highly interactive classroom setting that combines discussion, case analysis and experiential learning activities. In addition, students will be encouraged to think about their own effectiveness as students and develop plans to identify and achieve their academic goals.

Course Learning Objectives:

1. Understand the social, economic and ecological environments of business and identify the stakeholder interests in each domain;
2. Critically analyze and identify business problems and opportunities in each of the triple bottom line domains;
3. Understand the requirements and rationale for General Education courses at WCU;
4. Understand the requirements of the pre-business program at WCU;
5. Differentiate between perspectives of organizational effectiveness and apply these definitions to their own experiences as students; and
6. Understand the importance of ethical decision-making in each of the triple bottom line domains.

Course Schedule

I. Introduction and Overview of The General Education and Business Curricula

- Week 1: Course Introduction and The Liberal Arts Tradition at WCU
- Week 2: The General Education Curriculum at WCU and the E-Portfolio
- Week 3: Understanding the Pre-Business Curriculum and a Guide to Succeeding as a Business Student at WCU
- Week 4: Non-cognitive factors that impact student success
- Week 5: Understanding the Learning Process: Biological, Social and Cognitive Factors

2. The Triple Bottom Line Approach to Business

- Week 6: Understanding the Triple Bottom Line
Video & Discussion: The Corporation
- Week 7: Economic Performance: Shareholder View of the Firm
Case Analysis: Fraud at Wells Fargo Bank
- Week 8: Social Performance: Stakeholder Analysis & Business Ethics
Case Analysis: Apple Computers or Facebook Use of Meta-data
- Week 9: Environmental Performance: Sustainable Business
Video & Discussion: The Story of Stuff
- Week 10: Leadership, Decision Making and Stakeholder Interests
Case Analysis: Volkswagen Emissions Cover-up
- Week 11: Understanding Organizational Effectiveness and Measuring Firm Success
- Week 12: Stakeholder Models for Change: Socially Responsible Investing, B Corporations, Cooperatives & Localism
Guest Speaker

3. Developing A Strategy for Success At West Chester University

- Week 13: Strengths-based learning and strengths-based alignment of professional goals
- Week 14: Overview of Goal Setting and Performance Assessment
- Week 15: Developing a 4 Year Personal Plan for Academic Success

Sample Assignments

Analysis Papers – Two analysis papers will give students the opportunity to apply course concepts to real world cases while developing critical thinking and writing skills.

Sample Paper Topic:

Read the following article and answer the questions in an essay of three single spaced pages, including the chart.

Article: [New York Times, January 25, 2012](#)

In China, Human Costs Are Built Into an iPad

By **CHARLES DUHIGG** and **DAVID BARBOZA**

1. What is the main ethical issue that Apple faces in this case? (introduction - one paragraph only)
2. What stakeholders are involved in the case? Do your stakeholder analysis in chart form the same way we did in class and use the following column headings:

Stakeholder	Interest

3. Which two stakeholder(s) are most important to Apple in this case and why?
4. What should Apple do and why?

Team Debate – Team debates will give students a chance to research and present perspectives on current issues, practice presenting a position with which they might not agree and gain experience the strength of other people’s arguments.

Sample Debate Topics:

- **MINIMUM WAGE** -> Should the federal minimum wage be raised to \$10.10 per hour?
- **SHARING ECONOMY** -> Using Uber as an example, is the “on-demand” or “gig” economy good for workers?
- **TECHNOLOGY/PRIVACY** -> Should there be a federal law making it harder to track consumers' behavior online?

Sample Course Materials

- 1) Why the Triple Bottom Line Matters More than Ever
<https://www.greenbiz.com/blog/2010/01/08/why-triple-bottom-line-matters-more-ever>
- 2) Why Everyone Wants to Work for the 'Good Guys'
<http://www.cnn.com/2012/11/07/business/global-office-csr-volunteer/>
- 3) What Went Awry at Wells Fargo? The Beaten Path of a Toxic Culture
https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/09/jobs/what-went-awry-at-wells-fargo-the-beaten-path-of-a-toxic-culture.html?_r=0

Radio Times Interview about culture and governance at Wells Fargo:
<http://whyy.org/cms/radiotimes/2016/10/03/wells-fargo-fallout/>

- 4) Socially Conscious Companies Have a New Yardstick
<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/09/giving/a-new-yardstick-for-socially-conscious-companies.html>