Minor in Sustainable Entrepreneurship and Business

Description

Minor in Sustainable Entrepreneurship and Business.

The minor concept

A minor gives you the opportunity of having a second specialization in your degree. The minor is a bundle of three to four electives that can be chosen separately but if chosen together rewards a minor.

Purpose

This Minor looks at various efforts to build more sustainable entrepreneurial and business practices. It explores opportunities for addressing big social and environmental challenges and asks in particular how the private and civil society sectors can contribute to developing more equal and sustainable societies.

Citizen protests have spread around the world, intellectuals denounce the increased neo-liberalization of our economies, political commentators moan about weak democracies, and activists condemn the lack of political and economic imagination to counter inequality, deficient educational systems, unreliable financial institutions, mounting migratory challenges, and apocalyptic environmental destruction. These global challenges require a broad collective effort to re-imagine current capitalism and build more sustainable economies.

As a response to such challenges, many individuals, communities and organisations are both suggesting new socio-economic models and experimenting with new entrepreneurial and business practices. These propose rationalities and practices that go beyond merely attenuating the ills of the world. Instead, they are proposing new sets of values on which to organise our social and economic life; they are putting forward new ways of thinking and doing that have the potential to project us towards a fairer and sustainable future.

This Minor aims to ignite a conversation about how to build more humane community-oriented societies. It looks at past and present efforts to reimagine how we live together and relate to the environment. The Minor is organised in three courses. The first introduces four distinct logics guiding efforts to build more sustainable entrepreneurial and business practices. Courses two and three focus each on one major current challenge, namely social fragmentation & environmental degradation and climate change.

The Minor is part of the series *Advanced Studies Electives*. It addresses students in their last year of their master who are looking for inspiration for their master theses. The Minor will introduce the most current research in the field of Sustainable Entrepreneurship and Business, including state-of-the-art research debates and questions for potential master theses.

As part of the Minor, students will take part in a matchmaking event, designed to help students find study partners and potential co-authors for their theses.

Structure

The below table lists the structure and the ECTS credits of the individual courses. The course descriptions are available in the online course catalogue. Direct links are inserted in the below table.

Content

Re-imagining Capitalism

Growing inequality, catastrophic environmental damage, and a general mistrust in capitalism as a system currently hampers the legitimacy of companies and puts pressure on political systems worldwide. This course looks at various attempts to "reimagine capitalism." It explores opportunities for addressing big societal problems and asks in particular how the private and the civil society sectors can contribute to developing more just and equal societies.

In the aftermath of one of the worst financial, economic and social crisis in post-war history, the discussion on the capitalist system and its form has intensified. As a response to big societal problems, many individuals, communities and organizations around the globe are experimenting with new business models. This course aims at exploring past and present efforts to re-imagine capitalism and introduces students to four distinct positions that are shaping businesses worldwide:

1. Conscious capitalism – A growing number of business leaders, e.g. from Starbucks, Patagonia and Whole Foods, are building business models beyond the profit motive and shareholder value ideas. Conscious capitalism is about acknowledging the wider role of businesses in society. But, aren't the terms "capitalism" and "conscious" contradictory or can the oxymoron be overcome?

2. Social entrepreneurial initiatives – Although the "social" and the "entrepreneurial" are often seen as two opposing rationalities, social entrepreneurs insist on the synergies between these two ways of thinking and acting. From micro-lending programs to bio-toilets, social entrepreneurial initiatives are promoting social innovations that are changing industries and societies for good. Using real-life examples of social entrepreneurship, the course will look at the effects of such hybrid rationalities on the socioeconomic systems they aim to advance.

3. Sharing economy – In the last few years, a number of initiatives emerged around the "sharing economy." Airbnb, Uber, or couch-surfing are suggesting new types of business models. But, to what extent are the values informing the sharing economy proposing a truly novel economic system, and which are the obstacles to their economic and social success?

4. Community economies –Economic practices that nourish the values of mutual aid, reciprocity, co-operation, and collaboration change communities from Mondragón in Northern Spain to New Orleans in Louisiana. Cooperative ownership models and alternative local currencies seem to empower communities to build their own economic and business environments. But are such initiatives scalable and can they be transferred between regions?

This course is designed for students who want to explore the idea that some of the “big” societal problems can be effectively addressed by high performing private firms or social activists. Students will be exposed to the business realities that come with “reimagining capitalism” and will discuss obstacles and context factors for their implementation. Based on case study discussions of real-life businesses, students will learn how to develop realistic business models and implement them into practice by taking both the industry and socio-political context into account. We will discuss strategic management tools and consider if and how they should be adapted to these socially conscious capitalist businesses.

Revising the Commons, Re-imagining Collectives

Looking at various efforts to organise resilient communities and govern the commons, the course familiarises students with interdisciplinary theories that explore alternative ways of organizing.

The course’s first block – Re-visiting the Commons – takes a point of departure in the work of political scientist Elinor Ostrom, winner of the 2009 Nobel Prize in economics. Her work offers a novel insight into what happens when both private sector firms and public sector organizations fail to organize collective goods (water, forests, fisheries) effectively, and how communities organize to solve their own problems—with varying degrees of success. Ostrom’s scholarship invites us to approach organizations in the broadest sense of the term, allowing us to analyze the limitations of the corporate organizational form and engage with cases where other forms of organizing seek to address those shortcomings. Against the backdrop of Ostrom’s scholarship, we will explore alternative forms of organizing: Informal networks, temporary coalitions and partnerships that fall under neither market nor hierarchy and that have proven highly productive.

The course’s second block – Re-imagining the Collectives – picks up where the first block left and explores alternative organizational forms further. Taking institutional theory as a starting point, it engages with the critique launched at institutional theory that rather than assigning entrepreneurship to single – often heroic – individuals, it should be considered the result of collective endeavors. Engaging with institutional theory and its critics, we’ll explore creative collectives and their innovative potential working with cases of social and cultural entrepreneurship including: The shared economy; co-creation in the public sector critically exploring the roots to and creation of public value, and finally art movements analyzing the political role of art in society.

Re-imagining Environmental Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship typically focuses on identifying new opportunities for creating value for customers or users and commercially developing those opportunities to establish profitable businesses. Entrepreneurship, however, is in a process of redefinition and is increasingly understood as a way of responding to major societal crises, as individuals, communities, corporations and organizations all over the world experiment with new business models and solutions.

Specifically, with environmental entrepreneurship being proposed as an engine toward a greener economy and a brighter future for humanity, debates have erupted regarding the role of entrepreneurship in problem-solving, some arguing that profitability and environmental concerns cannot coexist, while others identify entrepreneurship as the silver bullet to combat climate change and other environmental issues in the vacuum left by the international political system’s failure to handle an increasingly bleak situation. Still others identify environmental entrepreneurship more broadly as new, alternative forms of organizing, often unrelated to profit; as grassroots initiatives reimagining local communities and less CO_2-intensive ways of living.

The aim of this course is to introduce students to the different camps, theories and critical perspectives in the debate about environmental entrepreneurship, enabling the students to analyze motivations, impacts and ethical issues of specific cases of environmental entrepreneurship as well as the broader impact and role of environmental entrepreneurship in society.

Examinations

The minor consists of the examinations listed below. The learning objectives and the regulations of the individual examinations are prescribed in the online course catalogue. Direct links to the individual examinations are inserted in the table below.

Further information

Minor coordinator

Ester Barinaga & Christina Lubinski, Department of Management, Politics and Philosophy

Study Board

Cand Soc Study Board

How to sign up

If you want to sign up for the Minor in Sustainable Entrepreneurship and Business you have to select CSOCM1001U when you sign up for electives. You will subsequently be signed up for all three courses. You do not have to select all three courses individually.