# Circular economy and sustainability

## Dr. Mirko Olivieri, Dr. Maria Cristina Zaccone

***COURSE AIMS AND INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES***

Taking action to combat climate change, reduce social inequalities, and develop sustainable practices has become imperative for corporations. Fortunately, the United Nations 2030 Agenda with its 17 goals charted the path forward. To be sustainable, a corporation needs to find new operating models which allow it to generate value for the benefit not only of shareholders but also of other corporate stakeholders. Based on this perspective, the course aims to provide basic knowledge about circular economy and sustainability. The course answers key questions such as: Who do companies create value for? What are the most appropriate models for contributing to sustainable development? How to manage relationships with suppliers if you want to be respectful of the natural environment and human rights? How to develop a sustainable marketing plan? How to use sustainable marketing techniques to create value and improve customer satisfaction? How to communicate corporate sustainability commitment to customers? How to promote social sustainability? How to promote diversity and inclusion? Which tools to adopt to measure and report on sustainability performance?

Upon completion of the course, students will understand the various implications arising from corporate activity on the natural environment and society. In addition, students will know the main circular economy and sustainability strategies which can enable a business to amplify positive impacts and reduce negative ones. Lastly, students will be able to communicate using the specific vocabulary of circular economy and sustainability. To reach this aim, the course is structured around two modules, each with a specific focus area.

***COURSE CONTENT***

Module I

The aim of module I is to introduce the topics of circular economy and sustainability, with a focus on sustainable marketing planning. Particularly, the topics covered by this module are the following: sustainable marketing; sustainable consumer and buyer behavior; sustainable marketing research; the marketing mix; sustainable marketing planning; sustainable entrepreneurship; sustainable branding; and digital marketing in the sustainable age.

Module II

Module II aims to focus on key theories and concepts related to sustainability and circular economy strategies. The topics covered by this module are the following: environmental sustainability; social sustainability; circular economy; stakeholder management; social and environmental sustainability along the supply chain; corporate welfare and work-life balance; social impact; diversity and inclusion; strategic philanthropy; sustainability reporting; new technologies for sustainability; sustainable governance and management.

***READING LIST[[1]](#footnote-1)***

Module I

Richardson, N. (2020). *Sustainable Marketing Planning* (1st Edition). New York: Routledge. (Selected chapters)

Module II

Rasche, A., Morsing, M., Moon, J., & Kourula, A. (Eds.). (2023). *Corporate Sustainability: Managing Responsible Business in a Globalised World* (2nd ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (Selected chapters)

***TEACHING METHOD***

The teaching method adopted in this course is highly interactive. It includes lectures, analysis and discussion of case studies, guest lectures from the corporate world, and group activities. A prerequisite for active participation is that students prepare assigned case studies in advance for the class.

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

For *attending* students, the final assessment method consists of a mix of elements: i) a written mid-term exam on the contents covered by the module I (40%); ii) a group assignment to put into practice the contents covered by the module I (10%); iii) a written end-term exam on the contents covered by the module II (50%).

The written exam consists of both multiple-choice and open questions. The written exam aims at assessing the students’ familiarity with the main concepts and theories related to the two modules of the course. Particularly, the objective of the written exam is to understand if the student has learned the conceptual and methodological tools, as well as if the student can interconnect the various concepts related to sustainability and circular economy.

The evaluation criteria adopted are as follows: knowledge and mastery of the discipline; use of discipline-specific vocabulary; clarity of exposition; practical application of the theoretical concepts. Further details will be provided at the beginning of the course and made available on Blackboard.

For *non-attending* students, the final assessment method consists of a single element: a written exam. The examination program for *non-attending* students will be made available on Blackboard.

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

There are no specific prerequisites. However, the student who decides to enroll in this course should have basic knowledge of management. The course is taught in English. Attendance in the course is not compulsory but strongly recommended. Further information about the course contents, study materials, and information about exam methods is available on Blackboard.

***OFFICE HOURS***

Students can meet Dr. Mirko Olivieri at Centro di Ricerche di Marketing, Via Necchi 7 – 20123 Milano. Students can meet Dr. Maria Cristina Zaccone at ALTIS Graduate School of Sustainable Management, in Via San Vittore 18 – 20123 Milano. To fix an appointment it is needed to send an email to the lecturers.

1. The texts listed in the bibliography can be purchased from the University bookstores; they can also be purchased from other retailers. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)