The Wisconsin School of Business Sustainability and Entrepreneurship: A Community Forum

Course Syllabus
Spring 2013
2175 or 5120 Grainger Hall

En Studies 900,
Gen Bus 765,

Alternating Fridays, noon – 1:15 pm

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This program is supported by the WI Sustainable Business Council and the UW Office of Sustainability.

Objectives:

This course is for students and community members to learn from entrepreneurs about the entrepreneurial process. Over the course of 9 class meetings, we will hear from participants in the Slow Money movement in Wisconsin who are entrepreneurs in the food and agriculture area.

These speakers are all entrepreneurs and will be talking about the entrepreneurial process. We'll hear about how their initial idea was turned into a business, including what it took to actually take action on the idea, who their support network included, whether they developed a business plan, where they sought funding, what hurdles they encountered, and generally what experiences and knowledge they would share with a class of students interested in entrepreneurship.

Entrepreneurs are recognized as a driver of innovation, employment and value creation in the private sector, and through this class, I hope to convince you this is true for entrepreneurs in and around Wisconsin. Without the involvement of entrepreneurs in creating jobs, supporting (and being supported by) their communities, and reshaping how we think about our individual and collective responsibility to the earth and future generations, our chances of successfully navigating the very troubled waters ahead of us are slim.

This class brings together students with community members to dialogue on the relevance of sustainability and entrepreneurship in a focused and constructive way. Though the class is only a one credit class, it is my hope that the lessons and knowledge that you will take from this class will rival that which you would take from a three credit class.

I am deeply indebted and blessed with support from the Slow Money Wisconsin group, the WI School of Business, the Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies, the Office of Corporate Relations and the WI Sustainable Business Council.

GROUND RULES: It is essential that you **be present for each class**. One absence will affect your grade, two absences will result in you not passing the class. In addition to the 7 community forums, we will also meet on January 25 and May 10. You must be present for these meetings also.

I do realize that emergencies arise. If you find that you must miss class, please let Tom know before class. Extra credit opportunities will be available if you are concerned about your grade.

This is not a course geared toward "passive learning". Your purpose for being in this class should not be to passively receive information from "experts", but rather to actively engage in your own inquiry and restructure your thoughts about, and your relationship with, the concept of sustainability.

You will be asked to read a book about sustainability and entrepreneurship. I recommend Woody Tasch's Slow Money book, but if you are interested in Be the Solution by Michael Strong, or some other book, let Tom know. Tom does need to approve your selection of an alternative book.

I will need you to submit a one page (standard margins, **single spaced** and 10 point or 12 point font) response to the book by class on May 10th. This response to the book may include brief comments, reflections or observations about the relationship of the book to something that one of the speakers talked about or that you are pursuing.

You will also be assigned one short writing assignment for the class. It is important to note that you will be graded on both the content and **your writing skills**. This means that your ability to distill out the important pieces of information from your interview are given equal weight with grammar, organization, development of an ideas, and other writing skills. Being able to say what you need to say clearly is an important skill to learn.

Your short paper will be an interview with a business person with responsibility in the food or agriculture area. It may be with one of our speakers. You should prepare your questions in advance and then use the questions that worked the best or got the best answers in your write-up. For your short paper to be graded highly, you will need to ask probing questions and develop the answers that you get so that the answers are interesting, accurate and readable. The interview is also due by May 10th.

GRADING

50% of your final grade will be based upon Citizenship - includes attendance, attitude, interest, appreciation, enthusiasm, active and productive participation in class and knowledge of topics.
25% of your final grade will be based upon your written response to the required book
25% of your final grade will be based upon your interview.

In fairness to others in the class, late submissions of the written response to the book or the short paper will be penalized at a rate of 20% of the paper's value per day (e.g., your short papers presented one day late will receive at most a weight of 20 out of the 25 points available).

LIST OF MATERIALS

Books (pick one of these two, or pick a different book):

Inquiries into the Nature of Slow Money: Investing as if Food, Farms, and Fertility Mattered, by Woody Tasch (White River Juntion, VT. Chelsea Green, 2011) $15.95

Be The Solution: How Entrepreneurs and Conscious Capitalists Can Solve All the World's Problems, by Michael Strong (Hoboken, NJ. John Wiley & Sons, 2009) $24.95

Class will meet only on the following dates: January 25, February 8 & 22, March 1,15 & 22, April 5 & 19 and May 10.

January 25 -- Class introduction. Review syllabus, describe relationship of class to School of Business, Nelson Institute.

February 8 – Tera'sWhey, Tera Johnson, founder and entrepreneur, http://www.teraswhey.com/

February 22 – Water House Foods, Shawn Rediske, co-owner, breadmaker, http://waterhousefoods.com/

March 1st – Brattset Family Farm, Kirsten Jurcek, grazier, http://www.farmfreshatlas.org/southeast/farms/brattset.htm

March 22 – Keewaydin Farms/Just Local Foods, Rufus Haucke, Owner, www.justlocalproduce.com and www.keewaydinfarms.com

April 5 – Parrfection Produce, David Parr, founder, http://www.parrfectionproduce.com

April 19 – Kelley Country Creamery, Karen Kelley, owner, http://kelleycountrycreamery.com/

April 26 – Black Earth Meats, Bartlett Durand, owner http://www.blackearthmeats.com/

May 10 - Class wrap-up. Final assignments due.