

The Four Tenets of Conscious Capitalism

Course Syllabus

Introduction into Conscious Business Education

Our purpose is to educate the current and next generation of business leaders & entrepreneurs in Europe to conduct business consciously. With ‘consciously’ referring to conducting business in a way that is purpose-driven, ethical, human-centered, sustainable, and inclusive, and where all Business Stakeholders (not only shareholders and managers) benefit. For the last 10 – 15 years researchers demonstrated that consciously led companies not only ensure all stakeholders benefit as a result of economic progress, but conscious businesses also are economically more successful. However, the practices of conscious business – and what might be different from a traditional view on business – is not yet an explicit part of business education in Europe.

The current economic system is under pressure because of unsustainable exploitation of resources and increasing pollution of our planet. Climate change and severe biodiversity losses are accelerating at an unprecedented scale while societies are facing rising inequalities in wealth and access to opportunities. These problems are not separate crises, but they can all be rooted in fundamental flaws of the current economic system and imply a fundamental change towards an economy that is sustainable, circular, prosperous, and inclusive.

Many of the challenges Europe faces require businesses or support from businesses to create innovative solutions. Business not only are drivers for innovation, jobs and economic wealth, conscious businesses can also create solutions for real problems, but without the collateral damage to some of their stakeholders – be it towards nature, employees, health, equality, or local communities. Currently, too many businesses are still operating extractively, making them (major) contributors to some of our biggest problems such as climate change, inequality, public health and loss of biodiversity.

We believe businesses can be drivers of good, if they design, organize, and create their business consciously. Therefore, it is of paramount importance to educate current and future business leaders regarding how to manage more consciously so that potential damage is eliminated or minimized, and to increase benefits to society and the planet. We aim to address this challenge by creating and teaching an innovative business syllabus which includes Conscious Business Practices for bachelor-, graduate- & executive-level education. Based upon the Syllabus, Conscious Business Education trains current business teachers on how to incorporate the Syllabus into their business education courses and/ or programs.

Goals for the complete syllabus on Conscious Business (21 courses):

1. Describe and teach innovative methodologies how business students can become more conscious leaders
2. Understand tools and methodologies for conscious business
3. Apply tools and methodologies to manage businesses better
4. Embedding ethics and ethical dilemmas in every course
5. Stimulate reflection and development of leaders to become more system-oriented, ethical, inclusive and conscious.
6. Superiority of purpose-driven companies

Overview



Course Code	Grad_Lead_Conscious Entrepreneurship
Course Title	Conscious Entrepreneurship (Conscious Business Education)
Degree	Graduate
Course Length	30 academic hrs on site
Number of ECTS Credits	3 ECTS
Total workload	30 hours on-site lectures and instruction (without guest lectures) 60 hours of private study 90 hours total
Prerequisites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General, foundational business studies knowledge • Openness to personal reflection
Teaching and Learning Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immersive nature experience • Photographic documenting • Interactive presentations • Prototyping • Guided database research • Integration of related methodologies in idea generation • Self-reflective journaling • Coaching • Inspirational videos • Course readings •
Assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group presentation (10%) • Two assignments (Conscious Entrepreneurship Impact Matrix, Business Model Canvas) (each 10%) • Final pitch presentation (70%)
Course creators from Conscious Business Education	Creator: Prof. Dr. Christian Schmidkonz, Munich Business School, christian.schmidkonz@munich-business-school.de
Course Material Language	English

Introduction to the Course

The focus of this innovative entrepreneurship course is to create a deep understanding of the entrepreneur for the impact of one's own actions on nature and thus on people. Parts of the course take place in nature or in transitional spaces, such as abandoned factories. The students consciously learn how nature solves challenges itself and how it has developed the perfect "circular economy". Students are encouraged to tap into the wisdom of nature to develop a valid business idea that has a positive impact on nature and people. Students learn to use tools from a range of concepts: Cradle-to-Cradle, Biomimicry, Nature-based Solutions and Conscious Capitalism. Using a "Conscious Entrepreneurship Impact Matrix" they created themselves, the



students develop their product and business ideas. As part of practical course elements, the students develop a prototype for their idea. In this process they are constantly accompanied by a preceptor. Throughout the course, after each course element, students keep a self-reflective journal to document their personal development throughout the course and how they again and again connected with the immersive experience at the beginning of the class.

Learning Outcomes / Objectives

- Remember: Identify and recall the principles of conscious entrepreneurship and their role in building a sustainable future.
- Understand: Develop an appreciation for nature and its basic operating principles.
- Understand: Explain the concept of cradle-to-cradle and biomimicry and their application in sustainable design and business practices.
- Understand: Describe the role of nature in sustainable development and the impact of human activities on the natural environment.
- Apply: Design and build a prototype that takes into account the impact on nature and humans, using principles of conscious entrepreneurship, cradle-to-cradle, and biomimicry.
- Analyze: Evaluate the impact of the prototype on nature and humans and identify opportunities for improvement, using critical thinking skills.
- Evaluate: Assess the effectiveness of the prototype in addressing sustainability challenges and its potential for adoption in the marketplace.
- Create: Develop a business plan for the sustainable prototype that takes into account the impact on nature and humans and the principles of conscious entrepreneurship, cradle-to-cradle, and biomimicry.

Course Content (incl. Module Description)

Part 1: Awareness – 8hrs/all day

The key of the first part of the class is that it takes place outdoors for a whole day. It's a mandatory requirement that students, lecturer as well as additional experts (e.g. forester, naturalist, architect, recycling industry employee...) meet ideally in nature (forest, ocean beach, ...) or a transitional place such as abandoned factory buildings that are reclaimed/overgrown by nature.

At the beginning of the immersion each student receives a polaroid camera with a film that includes 10 photos.

During the first hour of the day the lecturer shares in the outdoors classroom the outline of the class, learning goals and the format. The lecturer introduces the concept of conscious entrepreneurship in the context of conscious business. Furthermore, the lecturer introduces/reminds the students of the concepts of biomimicry, bionic, circular economy and renewal vs. creation.

During a first guided walk through the environment students learn how to see/listen and make use of their senses. E.g., harmony and incongruity are pointed out. Students are asked to talk about what they see and notice and by that learn the concept of conscious visual storytelling.

In the afternoon students are asked to make use of their Polaroid cameras with only 10 photos to document what they experience. For this purpose, small groups can be built.

The class concludes with an individual open reflection about in what aspects students are now a different person compared to the beginning of the day.

Activity: All day immersion into nature or transitional space; photographic documentation

Assignments:



- Preparation of observation presentation in small groups up to three students
- Update in self-reflection journal

Part 2: Creating insights and connecting with frameworks

The second part of this class consists of two classroom lectures and activity sessions. The goal of this part is to understand relevant concepts and frameworks for a conscious business venture and to come up with a business idea.

In this class we try to connect the experiences made outdoors with common frameworks such as Cradle-to-Cradle, Biomimicry, Nature Based Systems and Conscious Capitalism.

We start by laying out and presenting what struck us during the immersive nature day. With the experience in mind the most relevant frameworks for the conscious business idea are presented. Subsequently students identify in groups problems that need to be solved and come up with first ideas to solve that problem and that could be turned into entrepreneurial ventures based on what they learned in class up to this point. The groups should consist of students with different backgrounds, so that they become aware of how what they see is impacted by their personal, cultural and other influences and biases.

Assignments:

- Take notes of potential problems/ideas, you'd like to work on.
- Watch "Joey Zwilling (Allbirds): Simplicity & Sustainability. The Story of Allbirds", Interview at Bits & Pretzels 2019 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-FvgLExCOPc&t=55s>)
- Watch "Circle of Life - The Gaia Hypothesis", arteTV (<https://www.arte.tv/de/videos/100811-000-A/kreislauf-des-lebens/>)
- Read chapter 4 in Braungart, M., & McDonough, W. (2002). Cradle to Cradle: Remaking the Way We Make Things. New York: North Point Press.
- Update in self-reflection journal

Part 3: Creating a Conscious Entrepreneur Impact Matrix (CEIM)

In this class students take the problem definition and the initial solution that they drafted and create a stakeholder map based on both. They then define a product journey (cradle-to-cradle) and create the Conscious Entrepreneur Impact Matrix (CEIM). Students then make an initial assessment of the idea based on the matrix using a rubric inspired by Bhutan's "Gross National Happiness Policy Selection Tool".

Assignments:

- Prepare a presentation of the initial ideas for solutions to the most critical segments in the Conscious Entrepreneur Impact Matrix
- Collect and bring material for prototype building
- Rubin, R. (2023). The Creative Act: A Way of Being. Edinburgh: Canongate Books Ltd.
- Reflect on initial version of CEIM
- Update in self-reflection journal

Part 4: Conceptualization and practical prototype development



In part 4 the project idea is turned into a first physical prototype which takes the impact of the creation into consideration. Students use physical materials to build a first prototype. Optional: Students do this outdoors and make use of what they can find in nature or in the transitional space.

This part consists of several sessions. Each session starts with a short presentation of the status of the prototype by each group for all groups. They share how they incorporated nature's basic operating principles into the prototype/product. Students collect feedback from the other groups and then continue to work on the prototype. The lecturer(s) act as preceptors and walk from station to station and challenge the students' work.

In one of the sessions students collect qualitative, directional feedback by handing their prototypes over to another group and observe the group addressing and solving optimization issues concerning the prototype strictly based on the conscious entrepreneurship elements in the Conscious Entrepreneur Impact Matrix. At the end of each session the Conscious Entrepreneur Impact Matrix is updated and shared with the lecturer. Changes in the matrix must be documented in a brief note. By that students refine their idea and discuss in teams the size and kind of impact of each step on each stakeholder.

Assignments:

- Prepare presentation of the prototype including explanations along the impact matrix.
- Read Rubin, R. (2023). The Creative Act: A Way of Being. Edinburgh: Canongate Books Ltd.
- Reflect on current version of CEIM
- Update in self-reflection journal

Part 5: Business aspects

Part 5 is a class in which basic business concepts are shared which are relevant for a conscious venture. This course introduces an extended form of the "Business Model Canvas" for responsible businesses. In addition, alternative forms of business such as purpose companies, foundations and cooperatives are presented. Students also learn what special financing options they have as a conscious entrepreneur.

Assignments:

- Reflect on current version of CEIM
- Update in self-reflection journal

Part 6: Pitching the prototypes and the impact

Students present their prototypes to a jury and present how they solved critical issues in terms of impact to the stakeholders. They also raise questions which are still critical and share how they'd plan to solve them. Students reflect individually in what way they approached the project in a different way because of the outdoors activities.

Assignments:

- Update in self-reflection journal
- Celebrate the project as a team

Expectation toward the students

The students are expected to be particularly open to new study experiences and able to reflect on themselves. The content of the course is much more holistic than you may be used to from classic entrepreneurship courses. This course requires a mindset of a conscious entrepreneur. Conscious entrepreneurs hold their business to a higher standard, serve and solve rather than sell and push the entrepreneur outside of her/his/they comfort zone. Conscious Entrepreneurs focus on the question of the difference that they can make instead of how much money they can make and how to reach a most profitable exit.

The course requires a high degree of curiosity about how to do business in a responsible way. A particularly large openness is necessary for breaking with existing business concepts.

Students are expected to attend class regularly. It is absolutely impossible to experience and study the course from literature sources only.

Active discussion in class is encouraged.

Doing your homework is essential for complete learning success.

Personal experiences shared by participants in the course room remain in the course room and are not shared with the outside world.

Tablets with a pen can be used for notes. Other electronic devices are only allowed during dedicated research slots and are not permitted otherwise as they inevitably distract and do not allow for an inner journey.

Teaching and Learning Methods used

- Immersive nature experience
- Photographic documenting
- Interactive presentations
- Prototyping
- Peer reviews
- Guided database research
- Integration of related methodologies in idea generation
- Self-reflective journaling
- Coaching
- Inspirational videos
- Course readings

Prerequisites

- General, foundational business studies knowledge
- Openness to personal reflection

Special Features of this Course

- First session all day in nature or a transitional space
- Ideally: Prototyping sessions outdoors
- Application of an individual “Conscious Entrepreneurship Impact Matrix”
- Completion of an inner journey for all students
- Creation of an emotional connection with the topic
- Strong impact on future business practices by students/graduates

Course Length

30 hours on-site lectures and instruction

Number of ECTS Credits

This is a 3 ECTS course.

Total Workload

Attending sessions	30hrs incl. at least 8hrs off site	30 hrs.
Private study	Recommended literature	20 hrs.
Assignments	Individual assignments as well as preparatory work for prototyping	40 hrs.
TOTAL		90 hrs.

Assessments

Quality of assignments (20%)

Each presentation as well as the class end deliverables such as the CEIM are graded.

Prototype presentation (40%)

Students present in groups their final prototypes to a jury. The students demonstrate at the same time in what way the CEIM guided them through the development of the prototype. The final prototype is particularly evaluated against the background of the impact of the demonstrated idea on nature and humans. The evaluation criteria are design, sustainability, functionality, impact on humans and impact on nature.

Final exam (40%)

The final exam asks students to demonstrate their deep understanding of the frameworks and concepts that were introduced in class.

Suggested Literature

- Anderson, R. (2009). Confession Of A Radical Industrialist - Profits, People, Purpose - Doing Business By Respecting The Earth. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Benyus, J. (2002). Biomimicry: innovation inspired by nature. New York: HarperCollins.
- Braungart, M., & McDonough, W. (2002). Cradle to Cradle: Remaking the Way We Make Things. New York: North Point Press.
- Chouinard, Y. (2016). Let My People Go Surfing: The Education of a Reluctant Businessman. New York: Penguin Books.
- Farnsworth, M. (2021). Biomimicry and Business - How Companies Are Using Nature's Strategies to Succeed. New York: Routledge.
- Goleman, D. (2009). Ecological Intelligence - How Knowing The Hidden Impacts Of What We Buy Can Change Everything. New York: Broadway Books.
- Mackey, J., & Sisodia, R. (2013). Conscious Capitalism - Liberating the heroic spirit of business. Boston: Harvard Business School Publishing.
- Polman, P., & Winston, A. (2021). Net positive: how courageous companies thrive by giving more than they take. Boston: Harvard Business Review Press.
- Rubin, R. (2023). The Creative Act: A Way of Being. Edinburgh: Canongate Books Ltd.
- Stahlhofer, N., Schmidkonz, C., & Kraft, P. (2018). Conscious Business in Germany - Assessing the Current Situation and Creating an Outlook for a New Paradigm. Cham: Springer.



- Wahl, D. (2016). Designing Regenerative Cultures. Axminster: Triarchy Press.
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Communication

The lecturer of the course should fill in her/his individual, preferred way of communication.

Classroom rules

The lecturer of the course should fill in her/his individual, preferred set of classroom rules.

Course creators from *Conscious Business Education*

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