Corporate Social Responsibility
POL S 398A
Spring 2010

Instructor: Aseem Prakash
Class Time: Monday and Wednesday, 1:30-3:20 p.m.
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Course Objectives
Corporate Responsibility has emerged as a dominant issue in recent years. Corporate accounting scandals, executive compensation, banking scandals, and other instances of corporate malfeasance have led several stakeholders to wonder whether corporations can be trusted to serve the public good. Fearing both new regulations as well as loss of reputation, some corporations have proactively adopted policies which seek to signal their commitment to behave responsibly. Some believe that such policies do not lead in any tangible improvement in corporate social behavior. In the context of this highly charged debate, this course will examine issues such as whether corporations and their executives have responsibilities to shareholders only and or do such responsibilities extent to other constituencies and stakeholders as well? How have corporations decided to pursue socially responsible policies? How does this vary across sectors? Across countries?

Course Material
Book:

Articles:
The readings have been placed on E-reserves. To access them, please go to the library homepage (www.lib.washington.edu), click on course reserves, select instructor and fill in "Prakash."

After clicking on "Prakash Aseem" you should be able to click through to the relevant readings for this particular class. You will have to accept electronic copyright restrictions and enter your UW Net ID, etc., but after going through those screens, you will be able to access the readings.

Course Expectations
This is an undergraduate honors course and my expectations from you are therefore high. I will adopt a seminar format. To maximize your learning from this course, it is imperative that you read the assigned articles in advance and actively participate in class discussions. You will be evaluated on the following:


**Article Presentations**

You will be assigned 4-5 articles to present in the class. Your presentation should last about 15-20 minutes. After briefly summarizing the article, please highlight the key lessons that emerge from the article and finally comment on its strengths and weaknesses. Please email me a two page (single-spaced) handout a day prior to your presentation. I will share this handout with the rest of the class.

**Class Discussion and Memos**

If you are not presenting an article, you still have to do the readings. Please email me a one page memo identifying key questions (based on the assigned readings) you will like to discuss in the class and why do you think this question is important. Your memo should reach me a day prior to the class.

**Project**

You will undertake a comparative study of (published) corporate responsibility reports of any two companies of your choice (they need to be from the same industry). In examining these reports, briefly consider the national and the sectoral/industry context in which these firm functions. This should give you some idea of the institutional and structural pressures on these companies to pursue corporate responsibility. Then compare the two reports in terms of the quality and quantity of the information provided.

Ask questions such as: Are these mere PR exercises? Do these reports measure corporate responsibility performance against some benchmark? To what extent, they present information that is critical of the firm? To what extent they lay out concrete goals and plans for the future?

In terms of your empirical strategy, please think in terms of the following questions: Which firms you are comparing and why? What are the interesting theoretical issues that this comparison is expected to raise (e.g. how country level institutional variations influence how firms think about and report on CSR), what is your empirical strategy (what specific empirical material you are going to examine), what sorts of conclusions or lessons do you expect to emerge from this comparison?

Project outlines are due Monday, May 12, and project reports (5 pages, single-spaced) are due Wednesday, June 4. In-class project presentations (20 minutes) are scheduled towards the end of the quarter. Project presentations and project reports will be evaluated on the following criteria:

- Research skills: Has the individual collected the appropriate and sufficient data?
- Analytical skills: Has the individual adequately analyzed the data by employing the concepts discussed in this course? Have the key market, regulatory and political issues been identified and their implications examined?
- Presentation skills: Is the presentation interesting and creative? Is it focused?

**Evaluation**

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<th>Component</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<td>Article critiques</td>
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I will strictly follow UW's policy on plagiarism:
http://depts.washington.edu/grading/issue1/honesty.htm#plagiarism

Class Schedule

Week 1
Monday, March 29
Introduction

Wednesday, March 31
Notion of a Firm

  (http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/cgi-bin/fulltext/119896448/PDFSTART)
- Alchian and Demsetz. 1972. Production, Information Costs, and Economic

Week 2
Monday, April 5
Responsible to Whom?

- Dodd. 1932. For Whom are the Corporate Managers Trustees? *Harvard Law Review*, 45(7).

Wednesday, April 7
Stakeholder Approach


Week 3
Monday, April 12
Globalization of CSR

Wednesday, April 14
Voluntary Programs
- Chapter 2, Club Theory Approach
- Chapter 5, Kimberley Process
- Chapter 6, Sweatshops

Week 4
Monday, April 19
Voluntary Programs
- Chapter 7, Shipping
- Chapter 8, Accounting
- Chapter 9, Universality of Standards

Wednesday, April 21
Voluntary Programs
- Chapter 10, Fiorino
- Chapter 11, Coglianese and Nash
- Chapter 12, Gugerty

Week 5
Monday, April 26
CSR Across Countries

Wednesday, April 28
CSR in Africa
- Eweje. 2006. The Role of MNEs in Community Development Initiatives in Developing Countries: Corporate Social Responsibility at Work in Nigeria and South Africa. Business & Society, 45: 93-129
**Week 6**  
**Monday, May 3**  
**Sectoral CSR**  

**Wednesday, May 5**  
**Corporate Governance**  

**Week 7**  
**Monday, May 10**  
**Corporate Social Strategy**  

**Wednesday, May 12**  
**NGO and Firms**  
- Derry and Waikar. 2008 Frames and Filters: Strategic Distrust as a Legitimation Tool in the 50-Year Battle Between Public Health Activists and Big Tobacco. *Business & Society, 47*: 102-139  
Week 8
Monday, May 17
NGOs and Firms

Wednesday, May 19
In-class Presentations

Week 9
Monday, May 24
In-class Presentations

Wednesday, May 26
No-class

Week 10
Monday, May 31
Business Case?

Wednesday, June 2
In-class Presentations

Week 11
Monday, June 7 (make up class)
Revisiting CSR