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of Glasgow

Re-thinking Management Education for Sustainability

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**WORLD
CHANGING
GLASGOW**

THE SUNDAY TIMES
THE SUNDAY TIMES

**GOOD
UNIVERSITY
GUIDE
2022**

**SCOTTISH
UNIVERSITY
OF THE YEAR**



Background

- The University of Glasgow adopted its “Glasgow Green” policy in 2020, aiming towards a completely carbon-neutral, net-zero campus and operations by 2030 (<https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/sustainability/glasgowgreen/actiononclimatechangekeystrands/>)
- Sustainability research is a core theme for the University’s School of Social Sciences (<https://www.gla.ac.uk/colleges/socialsciences/research/interdisciplinaryresearchthemes/sustainability/>)
- **However:** aside from specialist (mostly P/G) courses on sustainability themes, it’s unclear to date what extent teaching content and practice is changing across the general curriculum



MGT1023 Principles of Management

- Course Co-ordinator: Dr Matt Offord (matt.offord@glasgow.ac.uk)
- Course Lecturer: Dr Catherine Owen (catherine.owen@glasgow.ac.uk)
- Course Lecturer: Mr Iyke Ikegwuonu (iyke.ikegwuonu@glasgow.ac.uk)

- No one on the course team has a particular background or research specialism in sustainability or environmental issues.

- What we DO share is a keen interest in the impact our teaching has on the (mainly) young learners we support and the messages they receive about the purpose and impact of business management.

- Who is in this class? Around 300 first year learners and guest students on international exchange/Erasmus programmes.



Evolution of the course

- MGT1023 Principles of Management is one of four 10-credit courses at SCQF Level 7 that together comprise level 1 study in Business and Management at ASBS.
- The course introduces key tenets of management as they have evolved through human history (we start with the Ancient Greeks!) and considers the changing roles and activities of managers as transformers of resources into goods and services.
- The course illustrates and invites discussion of the various roles of managers with a wide-ranging theoretical and practical scope drawing on disciplines such as human resource management, finance, economics, supply chain management, marketing, logistics, and strategy.



The **KEY** question! Moving from **WHO, WHAT** and **HOW** to **WHY!**

- WHAT IS ALL THIS **FOR**???
- A core concern for the teaching team that also informs the content of the course is the question of **why? Why** should we put time and effort into entrepreneurship, business development, business theory and business teaching?
- And because this is an academic course, we don't want single or simplistic responses to that question, but something considered and multiple that draws on both theory and practice.
- The issue: this is a first year class and almost none of the students has had any exposure to real businesses except as a consumer/service user.



A starting-point

- Our very first resource: Milton Friedman visits the University of Glasgow (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C3I23Wz5aJ8>)
- The questions... is 'business' the same as 'capitalism'? And are business and capitalism the source of environmental catastrophe? Is it possible to run businesses that don't contribute to environmental collapse? What about other definitions of sustainability (e.g. employment, supply-chain relationships)? Can businesses be the creators of solutions to environmental problems? Is trade, not governments or NGOs the secret weapon in the climate crisis? What kinds of management practices might need to change?

Teaching practices in practice

- The course has online, self-directed resources that students are required to work through in their own time. These include cartoon, short videos, self-reflection exercises and ‘micro-writing’ tasks that together build into the first written assessment.
- The classroom experience is designed to be an interactive session that complements and builds on the online material and readings.
- **HOWEVER:** this is a very large first year class and even if they do the self-directed learning, they are unlikely to willingly offer comments or questions in front of their peers in the classroom.
- So... we start with video, and preferably something from a news report or TV programme (either drama or factual will do if the content supports the theory).
- An example: Trouble at Topshop. BBC/Open University 2022
(<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m001ckq4>)



Trouble at Topshop

- How do we use this video to discuss sustainability? First principles: sustainability is embedded into more general discussions about the company and how its purpose(s) inform activities and strategy
- Topshop is a particularly useful case study because the documentary offers two conflicting narratives and groups: one group is very concerned with profit margins and the concept of “buy low/sell high”. The other is design and customer-led and seeking self-actualisation through meeting personal goals that relate to ‘soft’ concepts including sustainability.
- BUT: how to get students to discuss the issues?!
 - In-class solution = MENTIMETER! (Software that allows you to post questions on-screen and students can use a QR code and login to create instant mid-maps or bar charts or other visual representations.

- Example of word cloud
- Created in “real time”
- Responsive to discussion
- Can create unexpected content
- Requires a steady hand!

Go to www.menti.com and use the code **6954 6238**

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How do organisations help employees to minimise risk?

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The word cloud displays various responses, with the most prominent being 'training' and 'by not hiring idiots'. Other visible words include 'communication', 'experience', 'guidelines', 'moodle', 'peer support', 'contracts', 'training model', 'supervision', 'teamwork training', 'keep them update', 'staff meetings', 'giving clear instructions', 'analyzing their cv's', 'company policies', 'structure of the business', 'having help in place', 'development', 'interviews', 'policy', 'meetings', 'contracts', 'peer support', 'training model', 'line manager', 'delegate tasks', 'brexit means brexit', 'having communication', 'communication channels', 'clear communication', and 'moodie'.

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Thinking on your feet in class

- This is a tricky class to teach: it is large, it includes some very young (17 and 18 year old students)
- Asking students to follow a set activity pattern in class doesn't work
- Instead, adopting a responsive model in which resources and questions follow the narrative 'flow' of the class whilst also covering key principles and learning outcomes is a hard thing to do, but it keeps their attention.
- Engaging video and other materials that have a "hook" for students (e.g. Milton Friedman at GLASGOW UNIVERSITY was a great starting-point).
- Treating 'poor' responses as a place to take the argument into a different but useful direction.
- In an ideal world: resources, examples, guest speakers that have immediate resonance for students

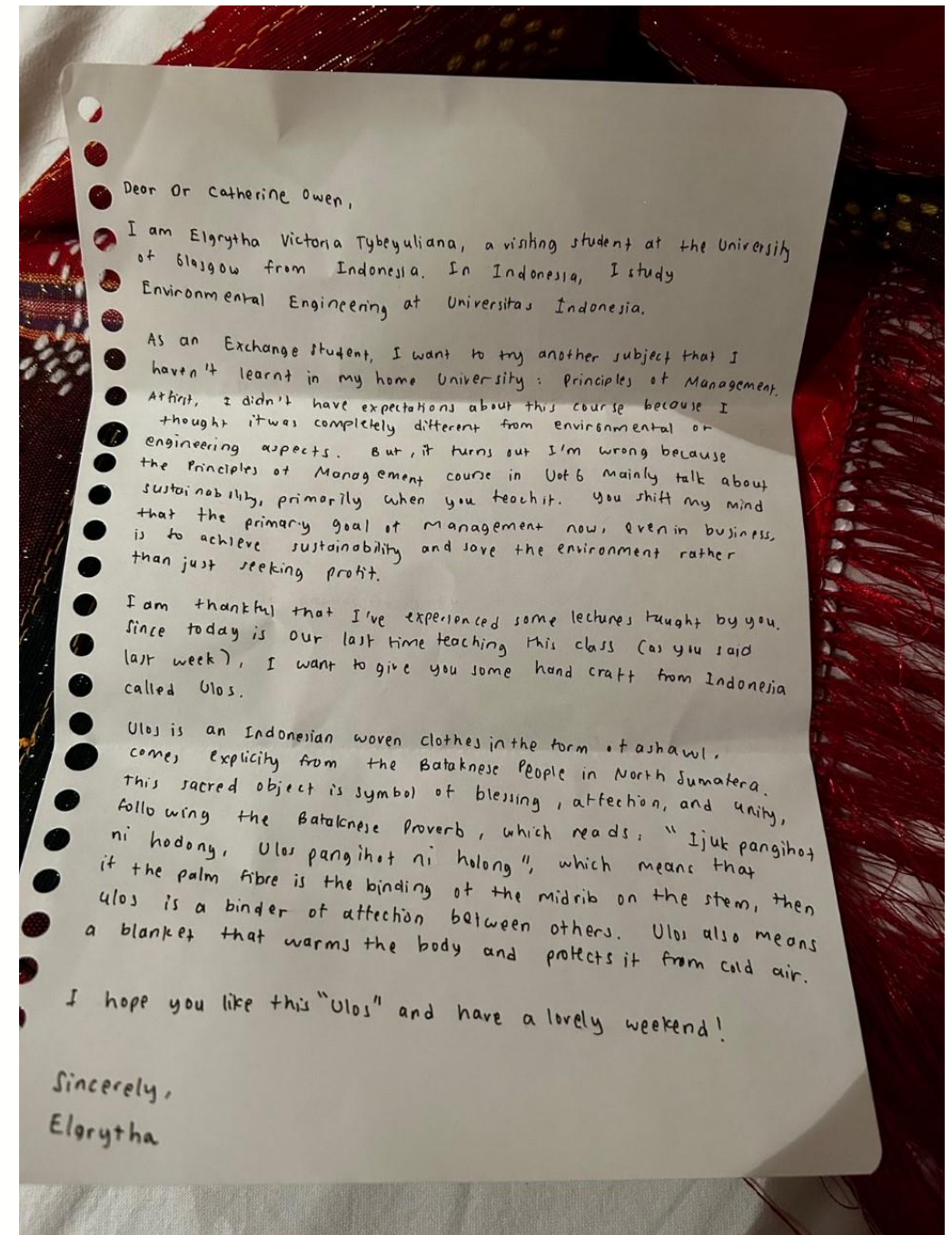
Additional resources and their impact

- For this year, a new course textbook and a brilliant guest lecture from Dr Oliver Laasch at the University of Manchester (<https://research.manchester.ac.uk/en/persons/oliver.laasch>).
- Oliver is a leading figure in the teaching of responsible management and his textbook and website are invaluable resources. I particularly liked his video from the set of Coronation Street that explains through interviews and studio tours how sustainability practices have changed jobs and routines.
- **HOWEVER**, in this course it seems to have been the (often hard-won) in-class discussions that have most effectively embedded key concepts and debates for students. Most importantly for me, this is an opportunity for students to work through scepticism, conflicting ideas and misunderstandings



Something rather special

- And at the end, some very special student feedback...





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Thank you!

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