College of
Integrative Studies

ACADEMIC YEAR 2025-26 **TERM** 1

COURSE CODE	:	IDIS201
COURSE TITLE	:	Overseas Project Experience (Sustainability Communication in Asia)
INSTRUCTOR	:	Associate Professor Sonny Rosenthal
EMAIL	:	srosenthal@smu.edu.sg
OFFICE	:	SOSS/CIS 04-28

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This SMU-X overseas course integrates academic learning with experiential projects provided by international organizations. It challenges students to apply their disciplinary knowledge and skills to real-world problems through interdisciplinary methods, with a particular emphasis on the cultural, social, and historical contexts that shape communication practices. Through collaboration with corporate, non-profit, and government-sector organizations abroad, students will explore how cultural narratives, values, and power structures influence strategic communication and decision-making.

With mentorship from both faculty and practitioners of partner organizations, students will develop practical and implementable solutions tailored to the sociocultural environments in which they operate. Although the course demands significant effort and time, its journey and outcomes can be highly rewarding. All SMU-XO courses meet the Global Exposure requirement.

With a focus on project-based experiential learning and cross-cultural understanding, SMU-XO courses aim to:

- Enhance awareness of interdisciplinary connections and differences, encouraging knowledge integration to address issues or challenges.
- Foster a deeper understanding of business opportunities and challenges in various global markets and economies relevant to students' interests.
- Familiarize students with informal networks and emphasize leveraging SMU-related networks in a global context.
- Provide global exposure to cultivate culturally sensitive global citizens.
- Encourage adaptation to new environments and leadership development.
- Promote creative and critical problem-solving skills.
- Support sound decision-making in complex situations.
- Enhance collaborative and productive teamwork.

This course primarily focuses on Southeast Asia but may include South Asia, East Asia, and Oceania. The partner organization will have a need for strategic planning and communication, whether they have never conducted such planning or need to update an existing plan. In addressing that need, students will develop a communication strategy that incorporates insights from cultural studies, social marketing, and strategic communication frameworks based on fieldwork in the host community.

v2.0 (*updated 09 September 2024*)

The first half of the semester includes lectures on key issues in sustainable development, social marketing, strategic communication, and cultural studies perspectives on globalization, identity, and local knowledge. Discussions with representatives from the partner organization, communication practitioners, and scholars of culture and communication will help students critically engage with the broader sociocultural dimensions of their projects.

During recess week, and with the support of the partner organization, students will conduct ethnographic fieldwork, including interviews, documentation, and participant observation, to understand local communication practices and cultural narratives. This immersive experience will provide students with new perspectives on the lived experiences of host communities and the sociopolitical forces shaping their challenges. It will be an opportunity to put theory into practice while reflecting on the ethical dimensions of intercultural engagement.

In the second half of the semester, students will refine their communication strategies, develop culturally resonant communication materials, and reflect on the long-term sustainability and ethical implications of their work. They will also consider how to evaluate the effectiveness of their strategies within specific cultural contexts. The semester concludes with a presentation of the communication strategy before a panel composed of the course instructor, representatives from the partner organization, and other interested individuals.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of the course, students should be able to:
1. **Describe** the role of businesses and organisations in sustainability.
2. **Identify** the marketing and communication needs of a partner organization.
3. **Produce** insightful audience research.
4. **Generate** an effective marketing strategy.

SMU GRADUATE LEARNING OUTCOMES

Disciplinary, Multidisciplinary, & Interdisciplinary Knowledge – Multidisciplinary knowledge: Students will learn how to use tools from social marketing and strategic communication.

Intellectual & creative skills – Critical thinking & problem solving: Students will apply their knowledge to solve practical sustainability problems facing businesses and organizations.

Interpersonal skills – Collaboration and leadership: Students will work in teams to develop marketing strategies while coordinating and negotiating their distinct perspectives and knowledge.

Global citizenship – Intercultural understanding and sensitivity: Students will interact with members of different cultures, including hard-to-reach or underserved groups.

Global citizenship – Understanding of sustainability issues: Students will be exposed to sustainability challenges in the region.

ASSESSMENT METHODS

Assessment method	Weightage	Description
Class participation (individual)	20%	Students will need to actively participate in the form of asking questions and sharing insights. Students can earn up to one mark each class for contributing valuable ideas to classroom discussions.
Midterm quiz (individual)	30%	Students will complete a midterm quiz testing their knowledge of course concepts through week 7. The quiz will involve a combination of multiple-choice, fill-in-the-blank, and short essay questions.
Fieldwork proposal (team)	10%	Teams will conduct primary and secondary research to understand the needs of the partner organization. They will craft a proposal that will guide their fieldwork activities. Proposals will be marked according to a rubric.
Marketing strategy (team)	30%	Teams will develop a marketing strategy that extends their fieldwork proposal by including insights from their fieldwork, actionable recommendations for the partner organization, and samples of communication collaterals. Proposals will be marked according to a rubric.
Presentation (team)	10%	Teams will present their marketing strategy to the partner organization and answer questions. Presentations will be marked according to a rubric.
Total:	100%	

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND EXPECTATION

Instructional Method/Strategy	Description (Purpose/Format)	Expectation(s)
Lecture	The instructor will present concepts related to weekly topics and readings. The purpose of lectures is to present complex ideas in manageable chunks.	Students should be attentive to the lecture contents and ask clarifying questions about things they feel they do not understand.
Team-based activities	Lectures will be interspersed with team-based activities. The purpose of the activities is to give students an opportunity to reflect and practice what they have learned.	Students should actively participate in team-based activities by contributing their own knowledge and perspectives while being receptive to others.
Fieldwork	Students will conduct overseas fieldwork involving meetings and interviews with the partner organization and local community. This work will be under the supervision of the instructor.	Students should carefully plan and execute the fieldwork to maximize their use of time in the field.

CONSULTATIONS

Online and face-to-face consultations will be on an ad hoc basis throughout the term. There will be scheduled consultations in weeks 10 and 11 as students prepare their research proposals.

RECOMMENDED TEXTBOOKS AND READINGS

Avidar, R. (2017). Public relations and social businesses: The importance of enhancing engagement. *Public Relations Review*, *43*(5), 955-962. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2017.03.015

Bocken, N. M. P., Fil, A., & Prabhu, J. (2016). Scaling up social businesses in developing markets. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, *139*, 295-308. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2016.08.045

Evans, W. D., Davis, K. C., & Farrelly, M. C. (2009). Planning for a media evaluation. In D. Holden, J. & M. A. Zimmerman (Eds.), *A practical guide to program evaluation planning: Theory and case examples* (pp. 123-142). Sage. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781452226507

McKenzie-Mohr, D., & Schultz, P. W. (2014). Choosing effective behavior change tools. *Social Marketing Quarterly*, *20*, 35-46. https://doi.org/10.1177/1524500413519257

Mitchell, A., Madill, J., & Chreim, S. (2015). Marketing and social enterprises: implications for social marketing. *Journal of Social Marketing*, *5*(4), 285-306. https://doi.org/10.1108/JSOCM-09-2014-0068

Ozano, K., & Khatri, R. (2018). Reflexivity, positionality and power in cross-cultural participatory action research with research assistants in rural Cambodia. *Educational Action Research*, *26*(2), 190-204. https://doi.org/10.1080/09650792.2017.1331860

Pelletier, L. G., & Sharp, E. (2008). Persuasive communication and proenvironmental behaviours: How message tailoring and message framing can improve the integration of behaviours through self-determined motivation. *Canadian Psychology/Psychologie canadienne*, *49*(3), 210-217. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0012755

Slater, M. D., Kelly, K. J., & Thackeray, R. (2006). Segmentation on a shoestring: Health audience segmentation in limited-budget and local social marketing interventions. *Health Promotion Practice*, *7*(2), 170-173. https://doi.org/10.1177/1524839906286616

WEEKLY LESSON PLAN

Week	Topic	Course Readings
1	Course introduction Social business as innovation	 Avidar, 2017
2	Scaling up social businesses	Bocken et al., 2016
3	Framework for strategic planning	McKenzie-Mohr & Schultz, 2014 Mitchell et al., 2015
4	Partner-specific topic	TBD
5	Audience research & segmentation	Slater et al., 2006
6	Community participatory research	Ozano & Khatri, 2017
7	Midterm & consultations	
8	FIELDWORK	
9	Making effective collaterals	Pelletier & Sharp, 2008
10	Consultations & group work	
11	Outcome evaluation	Evans et al., 2009
12	Consultations & group work	

| 13 | Presentations | |
| 14 | Study Break | |

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Academic Integrity

All acts of academic dishonesty (including, but not limited to, plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, facilitation of acts of academic dishonesty by others, unauthorised possession of exam questions, or tampering with the academic work of other students) are serious offences.

All work (whether oral or written) submitted for purposes of assessment must be the student's own work. Penalties for violation of the policy range from zero marks for the component assessment to expulsion, depending on the nature of the offence.

When in doubt, students should consult the instructors of the course. Details on the SMU Code of Academic Integrity may be accessed at https://smu.sharepoint.com/sites/oasis/SitePages/DOS-WKLSWC/UCSC.aspx.

Copyright Notice

Please note that all course materials are meant for personal use only, namely, for the purposes of teaching, studying and research. You are strictly not permitted to make copies of or print additional copies or distribute such copies of the course materials or any parts thereof, for commercial gain or exchange.

For the full copyright notice, please visit https://researchguides.smu.edu.sg/copyright.

<u>Accessibility</u>

SMU strives to make learning experiences accessible for all. If you anticipate or experience physical or academic barriers due to disability, please let the instructor know immediately. You are also welcome to contact the university's accessibility support team if you have questions or concerns about academic provisions: accessibility@smu.edu.sg. Please be aware that the accessible tables in our seminar room should remain available for students who require them.

<u>Digital Readiness for Teaching and Learning (DRTL)</u>

As part of emergency preparedness, instructors may conduct lessons online via the Zoom platform during the term, to prepare students for online learning. During an actual emergency, students will be notified to access the Zoom platform for their online lessons. The class schedule will mirror the current face-to-face class timetable unless otherwise stated.