



Course syllabus: The makings of humanistic management

[Online course description](#)

Context and aims

The Humanistic Management Center advocates a paradigm shift away from economic views on market activities towards a humanistic approach. To move from criticism of the status quo towards a fruitful discourse on alternatives we have developed a three stepped approach offering guidance and an anchor for reflection on managerial decisions as well as decision making processes. We understand humanistic management on the basis of three interrelated dimensions.

These are firstly that we as humans rightfully expect our dignity to be respected under all circumstance. The unconditional respect for our dignity is foundational for interpersonal interaction, including interactions taking place in business contexts. Secondly, that ethical consideration forms part and parcel of business decisions. If one follows through on the unconditional respect for human dignity, one must accept that decisions that impact others ought to be examined in terms of their consequences for all those affected. Thirdly that actively embracing corporate responsibility is contingent upon initiating and maintaining an ongoing dialogue with stakeholders. This active seeking of public legitimacy for corporate activities is to be understood as the dialogical extension of ethical reflection on corporate conduct and promotes the alignment of good intentions with activities that can produce desired outcomes.

Sustaining success in an increasingly stakeholder driven economy means that the business of business is no longer *only* business. This course aims to provide a compass to navigate the growing demand on businesses to actively seek and gain a public license to operate. Participants will discuss the merits of humanistic management and will have rich experiences in elaborating on these with management practitioners (course design A) or examine case examples of humanistic management in practice (course design B).

Course design A

This course is built on two blocks that aim to provide a theoretical backdrop, exposure to management practice, the opportunity to reflect on and present the gained insights and potentially discussing those with a practitioners.

- Firstly, participants will gain an understanding of the humanistic management framework through an introductory lecture in combination with case examples for humanistic management in practice that will be discussed in class. Participants will thus gain a solid understanding of the three stepped approach of humanistic management which will enable them to present and communicate its intentions and demonstrate how and where it is practiced. At the end of this block, teams of two to four members will form for the team assignments.
- Next, the teams will arrange for an interview with a management practitioner. In this interview the humanistic management approach will be presented and the interviewees are asked to respond by giving their impressions on the two dimensions of desirability and practicability of the approach. Participants will design a qualitative questionnaire before conducting the interviews.
- In the second block, the results of these interviews will be presented and discussed in a one hour long student led session in class focusing on the two dimensions of desirability and practicability. This will enable participants to gain an understanding of how practitioners respond to a humanistic management approach and where they see the most prevalent difficulties in practicing its principles.
- As a fourth (optional) part of this course, participants will have the opportunity to reflect and share their insights with management practitioners during a panel discussion at one of the interviewee's organizations during the last class of the course.

In combination these four pillars provide a rich experience. On the foundations of academic insight participants will seek exposure to management practice and share the results and impressions in the classroom. The fourth part, a panel discussion with practitioners on the merits of humanistic management practices is optional.

Course design B

This course is built on two blocks and an optional closing event. They aim to provide a theoretical backdrop, case examples of humanistic management and the opportunity to reflect on those cases and present the gained insights. An optional closing event provides the opportunity for exchange and discussion with practitioners.

- Firstly the participants will gain an understanding of the humanistic management framework through an introductory lecture on humanistic management including an overview of the case examples provided in this course. Participants will thus gain a solid understanding of the three stepped approach of humanistic management and a first glance at its practical implications. At the end of this block, teams of two to four members will form for the team assignments.
- Secondly the teams will chose a case example for their assignment. These cases stem from our growing case repository, 19 of which are also featured in our publication *Humanistic Management in Practice*. Each team will analyze their assigned case aiming to find its specific characteristics regarding humanistic management practices. The teams will write a short, two to four pages long paper summarizing their findings.
- In the second block the cases will be presented by the teams who will also moderate a subsequent discussion during a one hour session led by the student teams. The case examples are rich in evidence for business as *unusual*. Consequently the presentations and discussions should focus on those elements that represent a departure from the mainstream of business conduct and can demonstrate that commercially successful businesses operate around the world practicing humanistic management principles.
- As an optional closing event of this course, participants will have the opportunity to reflect on, and share the insights gained from the case examples with management practitioners during a panel discussion.

In combination these three blocks provide a rich experience. On solid foundations of academic insight, participants will analyze case examples and present and discuss the results in the classroom. As an optional fourth block a panel discussion with practitioners on the merits of humanistic management practices can be organized.

Didactics for personal growth

This course is built on an interdisciplinary approach with substantial self-managed elements to create a high sense of personal achievement within a content rich learning experience. The humanistic management framework draws on economics, management studies, philosophy, sociology and ethics to deliver an anchor to reflect on business conduct, guidance on managerial decision making and a tool to assess business readiness to earn public legitimacy.

At the humanistic Management Center we differentiate between action knowledge and orientation knowledge. Action knowledge is focusing on prescribing certain activities in specific situations in the expectation of achieving desired results. In contrast, orientation knowledge is focusing on enhancing the capacity of self reflection and procedural prescriptions to empower the individual to assess and respond to situations autonomously. Both types of knowledge are essential for managerial activities; however, this course is designed to enhance the orientation knowledge of participants.

Furthermore this course provides ample opportunity to refine presentational skills and all participants are called to actively participate throughout the course adopting a supportive role towards the presenting teams.

Time frame, schedule and deliverables

This course can be delivered in 20 – 30 classroom hours in two to four blocks while team members receive the same final grade.

In course design A the teams will submit the questionnaire they have designed for the practitioner interview (30% weighing) and present and discuss the results from the interview in a one hour long session led by the individual teams (70% weighing).

In course design B participants will write a short summary paper (two – four pages) describing the case example and highlighting the aspects in their case that exemplify humanistic management in practice (30% weighing). Participants will also be responsible for leading a one hour long course session including the presentation of their case and a moderated discussion focusing on those elements in the case that represent principles of humanistic management (70% weighing).

To facilitate easier travel arrangements the first and second as well as the third and potentially fourth block can be combined under both course schedules.

Faculty

Dr. Ernst von Kimakowitz is Director and co-founder of the Humanistic Management Center (www.humanisticmanagement.org), an independent think-tank, learning institution and non-profit advisory firm. He is also a lecturer in leadership skills at the University of St Gallen, Switzerland, a director of the Humanistic Management Network, co-editor of the Humanism in Business book series at Palgrave Macmillan, advisor to the Impact Investing Platform in São Paulo, Brazil and senior ambassador of the UK based Globalization for the Common Good Initiative (GCGI). Ernst's specializations include corporate responsibility, business and economic ethics, development theory and impact investing.



Ernst von Kimakowitz holds a M.Sc. from the London School of Economics (LSE), UK and has worked in strategy consulting with a leading management consulting firm based in London, England. Subsequently he went to the University of St Gallen in Switzerland where he earned an award winning Ph.D. from the University's Institute for Business Ethics.

Ernst frequently speaks at conferences, lectures at universities around the world and is consulting businesses as well as international organizations on questions regarding corporate social responsibilities, stakeholder engagement and development-conducive business conduct.

Faculty Profile: [Ernst von Kimakowitz](#)

Contact: universityteaching@humanisticmanagement.org