

## **Private Actors, Public Goods: Corporate Social Responsibility in Comparative Perspective ENV 3908 – Spring 2020**

Professor: Dr. Shana M. Starobin

Office: Roux Center 127

Office Hours: Tuesdays 4:05-5:00, Thursdays, by appointment

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### **Course Overview**

From fair trade chocolate to Kimberly Process certified diamonds, voluntary sustainability initiatives increasingly "govern" complex trans-border trade—to minimize environmental damages and human rights abuses exacerbated by globalization, especially when states prove incapable or unwilling to do so. Intensive in reading, research, and discussion, adopts a commodity-centered lens to examine transnational trade in comparative perspective. Students explore how global value chains—like "fast fashion" from Bangladesh and cell phones from China—defy conventional notions of political, geographic, and ecological boundaries and prompt a shift from "government" to "governance." Class meetings will include small group discussion, group activities, and presentations on different commodities, presented by students individually or in pairs. Students are expected to participate, learn from one another, and be tolerant towards a diverse perspective of opinions and ideas. Technology use (cellphones, laptops) in the classroom will be limited.

### **Readings and Blackboard**

There is one book required for this course. All other readings for the course will be posted to Blackboard in folders labeled for the food commodity or topic of focus for each class period. Course readings will cover a range of policy issues through a comparative commodity lens. It will be helpful for students to bring paper copies of readings to class in order to better engage with lecture material and participate in activities.

### **Assignments and Grading**

The final course grade will be determined by:

- Participation (includes weekly in class reading "check-ins," written reflections, and activities)
- Contributions as Leader(s) of Day on date of assigned commodity/issue area presentation
- Final research paper on a commodity or commodities, individually or in pairs.

**Participation:** Attendance and contributions to small and large group discussions are required for the course. Coming prepared having seriously considered the readings will be important to ensuring that the activities by presenters for each class period are successful and meaningful.

**Leader(s) of the Day:** Individually or in groups of two, students will be assigned a specific commodity and set of issues to present on during one class period. Presentations should be approximately 20 minutes in length and should build off the readings and videos included in the assigned commodity folder for that specific class date (although additional research is encouraged). The Leader(s) of the day put together a list of discussion questions to be shared with the class, along with any additional reading material, by Friday at 5PM (the week before the presentation). Following their presentation, Leader(s) will field questions from the class, followed by break out into group discussion or activities. Leader(s) are encouraged to research or design a creative group activity to be facilitated with support and in coordination with the professor. Debates, mock forums, and political simulations are encouraged. Professor Starobin will lead presentations on select commodities and issue areas over the first few weeks of the course to provide examples of what mini-lectures might entail and what class activities can look like. Professor Starobin will schedule meetings with each Leader of the Day team outside of scheduled class time, to discuss research ideas, review slides, or provide class activity suggestions.

### **Reading Assignments and Course Outline**

(All readings can be found in folders labeled with the class topic and lecture date)

**We will collaboratively discuss and draft a list of substantive topics at the start of the semester, linked to proposed student research projects during our next class meeting—and will update the syllabus as we go along, to reflect the substantive nature of research in the course.**