

MGT 290-003: Sustainable Energy Industry Immersion Course

Winter Quarter 2025 | 3 units

Course Schedule:

Fridays 9:30-4:30pm (Networking lunch provided 12-1:30pm)

5 days during the quarter:

- February 14
- February 21
- February 28
- March 7
- March 14

Minimum Prerequisites:

Must be a current MBA, JD, or other graduate-level student at UC Davis.

Students are encouraged to enroll in (or at least audit) EGG 290 Energy Seminar taught in Fall Quarters

Course Instructor:

- Benjamin Finkelor, Executive Director, Energy and Efficiency Institute
 - (530) 848-9493 cell
 - bmfinkelor@ucdavis.edu
- Office Hours by appointment and/or as agreed to by class

Course Abstract:

The Sustainable Energy Industry Immersion program at the UC Davis Graduate School of Management (GSM) brings together graduate students from multiple departments who are interested in the energy industry and exposes them to significant managerial problems being faced in this transforming sector. The main objective of this program is to continue to build on the reputation and connections of UC Davis in sustainable energy, transportation, and climate solutions by training students to examine problems comprehensively in interdisciplinary teams.

Society and business are facing pressing challenges associated with a worsening climate crisis and an increasing global population. These, coupled with the on-going challenges around electricity generation, transmission, and distribution, and the continued need for maintaining safe, reliable, affordable, and equitable access to energy, are the critical drivers in the energy industry.

The impact of new technologies and other innovations in solving a wide array of problems in this industry opens possibilities for energy companies and for other companies that depend on stable energy supplies. Regulation of energy is a prominent policy conundrum that must balance environmental, economic, health, social equity and technology concerns.

The aim of the GSM program is to produce the next generation leaders in this vital industry and other industries that depend on access to reliable energy services. Participants will learn from business and policy leaders who will present current energy challenges. Students will work in interdisciplinary teams to find solutions to present for discussion. The program has several distinguishing features:

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- Case challenges co-designed with industry executives to reflect the latest challenges in industry
- Classes comprised of students from the Graduate School of Management, the Energy Graduate Group, and other energy and environmental law and policy, and science and engineering related fields
- Five weeks of interactive classes on Fridays in Winter Quarter taught by senior executives from a select group of companies (Southern California Edison, SMUD, Wells Fargo, etc.)
- Group assignments in every class, examining potential solutions to management challenges
- Possible internship opportunities in the featured companies during Summer

Course Material:

There is no required textbook. Readings will be developed in conjunction with each guest executive instructor. The corresponding readings and data sets will be made available free weekly, to afford time for students to review and prepare for each case challenge.

Course Requirements/Grades:

Because this requires interactive, group case analysis, class attendance and participation are critical elements of successfully meeting three course requirements.

1. Ten case discussions in class and presentations back to the speaker: 1/3 of grade (drop lowest grade)
2. Five weekly Reflection Papers of 500-1000 words submitted online. 1/3 of grade (drop lowest two grades).
3. White Paper done individually or in groups of no more than 3 students, 2500-4000 words uploaded as a file by the last day of class. 1/3 of grade.

Detailed grading rubrics can be found further below.

Last Year's Speaker List [this will be updated]:

February 16

- AM Speaker: [Jose Bodipo-Memba](#), Chief Diversity Officer, SMUD
- PM Speaker: [Mitch Sears](#), Executive Officer, Valley Clean Energy
 - Joined by: Edward Burnham, Director of Finance and Internal Operations, Valley Clean Energy

February 23

- AM Speaker: [Alex Morris](#), General Manager, CA Community Power
- PM Speaker: [Michael Day](#), Advanced Energy Program Development Lead, Trane

March 1

- AM Speaker: [Jawaad Malik](#), Chief Strategy and Sustainability Officer, SoCalGas
 - Joined by: [Kevin Barker](#), Senior Manager of Energy and Environmental Policy, SoCalGas
- PM Speaker: [Mike Petouhoff](#), Associate Principal, Arup

March 8

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- AM Speaker: [Larry Kellerman](#), CEO, Atlantic Power & Utilities
- PM Speaker: [Phil Hopkins](#), Managing Director, Head of Renewable Energy & Environmental Finance, Wells Fargo Commercial Capital

March 15

- AM Speaker: [Lee Smith](#), Vice President, Daikin Comfort Technologies
 - Joined by: Ryohei Hinokuma, Director, Market Transformation and Advocacy, Daikin US Corporation
- PM Speaker: [Katie Sloan](#), Vice President, Customer Programs and Services, Southern California Edison

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Grading Rubrics

CASE PRESENTATIONS

There will be ten (10) external speakers that visit class. You are expected to prepare in advance for each of these speakers by researching them and the organization they represent. You are expected to read and critically think about any relevant information posted on the Canvas site in advance of the particular speaker presenting. You are expected to meet in your assigned team in advance of the class, and to prepare a preliminary presentation response to the case challenge. On the day of the course, your team of 3-5 students will be given a chance to further refine your prepared material based on the in-person case presentation, discussion and Q&A session, and then present your case response to the guest executive.

Scoring Rubric

Each case presentation assignment will be scored with a total possible 10 points, as follows:

4 point if you show up to class on time, dressed professionally.

3 point if you are actively listening, engaging with the speaker, and stay through the end of class.

3 points if you and your group (which must include at least 1 MBA and 1 non-MBA student) prepare and perform a compelling case presentation in response to the case challenge.

Grading

At the end of the quarter, we will drop your lowest score of the total 10 case presentations.

WEEKLY REFLECTIONS

All submissions should have your name, Guest Executive Instructors names, and Date at the top. Assignments are due on the Tuesday (at Midnight PST) following the prior week's Friday Guest Executive Instructor Case Challenges.

There will be five (5) short written "Weekly Reflection" assignments due during the quarter. The papers, which are expected to be between 500 and 1000 words, will provide you with an opportunity to reflect on what you learned from the previous week's speakers and case challenges and will be scored up to 20 points each (see grading criteria below). These papers must be your original work, and must recognize all quoted materials and cite all sources used in their preparation.

The assignment is designed to prove to us that you engaged thoughtfully in the case challenge immersion. If done well, each assignment should prove to be a useful "journal entry" that you can look back on long after your time during the course. It should briefly summarize the case challenge you and your team faced, describe your response to the case challenge, including both the relevant data you identified and your analysis of the situation. Do not simply repeat items from the readings or stated by the speaker, but do not ignore them altogether.

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Be sure to take a clear stand or opinion on the case challenge and provide ideas or facts from pre-assigned material, if available, and your research during the class, to support that stand (using appropriate citations).

As a graduate student at UC Davis, you will be expected to employ self-editing skills to produce a professional writing style. As a reminder, those skills involved the following:

- Concise expression
- Strong paragraphs, with good topical sentences
- Logical flow
- Shorter sentences, with mixed lengths
- Direct, fast-moving sentences
- Necessary jargon only

Those skills should be in evidence in your writing for this class. While you will not receive line editing, and may or may not receive comment about your writing, it will be a factor in the grading.

Scoring Rubric

We will score the assignments as follows:

20 points if you:

- (1) clearly state your position,
- (2) support it with ideas and facts from the readings, and
- (3) write with clarity and concision.

16 points if you give us two of three

12 points if you give us one out of three

0 points if you fail to turn it in on time.

Consider using [Grammarly](#) or an [alternative grammar tool](#) to assist you.

Submission

Assignments will be submitted electronically, via the course site on Canvas.

Grading

At the end of the quarter, we will drop the lowest 2 scores of the 5 assignments.

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WHITE PAPER

All submissions should have the names of all group members, a White Paper Title, and Date at the top

This assignment is a chance for you to develop a considered opinion on one of the many challenges and controversies that face the larger energy industry. A White Paper is a chance for you to work with colleagues across disciplines to consider an issue in some depth and to discuss some of the possible business or policy responses to the issue, as well as form an opinion. We expect you to select a non-trivial topic that is at least somewhat contentious or misconstrued and to provide some clarity about the choices that should and could be made on the issue.

White Papers are a form of persuasive writing and are frequently used in business and policy. They frame an issue in a way that engages the reader and entices the reader to learn more, and finally persuades the reader to adopt a perspective or to take action.

Your White Paper should be between 2500 and 4000 words. These papers must be your original work, and must recognize all quoted materials and cite all sources used in their preparation.

There is a note in the File section of the class Canvas site entitled WHAT IS A WHITE PAPER? HOW DO YOU WRITE ONE? This will give you guidance and examples of many White Papers on a range of issues and we encourage you to use them as inspiration.

Scoring Rubric

Although there is no single way to organize a White Paper we will be looking for the following in your writing:

- (1) Choose a significant issue facing some aspect of the sustainable energy economy or its governance/regulation
- (2) Give sufficient background so that the reader understands the context in which the issue is embedded (financial, political, social, etc.)
- (3) Provide a description of the possible choices and stakeholders (who wins/loses) for each if pertinent
- (4) Make a compelling argument for a particular course of action

Submission and Grading

Assignments will be submitted electronically, via the course site on Canvas. And all members of a group will receive the same grade but only one student needs to upload the file. The maximum points that will be awarded will be 100. Papers will be given a score of 0 if not turned in on time.

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We welcome and expect clear writing of the quality you would give to an employer or customer.

- Concise expression
- Strong paragraphs, with good topical sentences
- Logical flow
- Shorter sentences, with mixed lengths
- Direct, fast-moving sentences
- Necessary jargon only

These skills should be in evidence in your writing for this class. While you will not receive line editing, and may or may not receive comment about your writing, it **will** be a factor in the grading.

Groups of 2-3, with at least 1 MBA student included, will make up the group. Names of members in the group, the topic of the paper and a short abstract or outline are due by Friday March 1st for approval by the course instructor.

The best White Papers will be offered for publication on the GSM and/or EEI website with author permission.

Additional Items for Consideration

1) AI Policy

You are permitted to use generative AI tools in this class as doing so aligns with the course learning goal of producing case recommendations. The assignments (including your responses to the case challenges, your weekly reflections, and your white papers) are all designed such that there is no correct answer, and it will require critical thinking on your part. While AI can assist you, it cannot fully complete the project for you.

You may utilize AI to brainstorm, draft, and refine your work, provided all AI-generated content is clearly identified and appropriately cited. You are responsible for the information you submit based on an AI query, including the accuracy and appropriateness of the results. AI should not replace original thought or personal analysis; it is a supplementary tool to support the development of your ideas and arguments. Any use of AI must align with academic integrity standards, and misuse of AI (such as presenting generated content as your own work or failing to disclose its use) will be considered academic misconduct.

2) Statement on Accommodation

UC Davis is committed to educational equity in the academic setting, and in serving a diverse student body. All students who are interested in learning about how disabilities are accommodated can visit the [Student Disability Center](#) (SDC). If you are a student who requires academic accommodations, please contact the SDC directly at sdc@ucdavis.edu or 530-752-3184. If you receive an SDC Letter of Accommodation, submit it to your instructor for each course as soon as possible, at least within the first two weeks of a course.

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3) Rights and Responsibilities

All participants in the course, instructor and students, are expected to follow the UC Davis [Principles of Community](#), which includes affirmation of the right of [freedom of expression](#), and rejection of discrimination. The right to express points-of-view without fear of retaliation or censorship is a cornerstone of academic freedom. A diversity of opinions with respectful disagreement and informed debate enriches learning. However, in this course, any expression or disagreement should adhere to the obligations we have toward each other to build and maintain a climate of mutual respect and caring.

You are expected to take UC Davis's [Code of Academic Conduct](#) as seriously as we do. You were given this code of conduct with explicit explanations of violations (e.g. plagiarism, cheating, unauthorized collaboration, etc.) and your responsibilities in regard to them during orientation, and you signed a statement affirming that you understand it. Academic conduct violations will not be tolerated, and your instructor will not hesitate to turn violators over to Student Judicial Affairs. If you are uncertain about what constitutes an academic conduct violation, please refer to the code linked above, contact your instructor, or refer to the [Office of Student Judicial Affairs](#).

All material in the course that is not otherwise subject to copyright is the copyright of the course instructor and should be considered the instructor's intellectual property.

4) Safety and Emergency Preparedness

UC Davis has many resources to help in case of emergency or crisis. While reviewing campus [Emergency Information](#), you may want to register for UC Davis Warn Me and Aggie Alert, which will give you timely information and instructions about emergencies and situations on campus that affect your safety.

If there is an emergency in the classroom or in non-Davis locations, follow the instructions of your instructor.

5) Student Wellness

You deserve respect, and are encouraged to [practice self-care](#) so that you can remain focused and engaged; that might mean getting a drink of water, leaving to use the restroom, taking a moment to stretch, or doing something else you need to do to take care of yourself. Please be respectful of others by minimizing distractions when practicing self-care – especially in lab, field or studio settings where safety is imperative.

College life can be overwhelming at times but know that you are not alone if you're feeling stressed. For many of us, systems of oppression such as racism, sexism, heterosexism or cissexism may cause additional stress. Please remember to practice self-care and reach out for support if and when you need it.

You can visit [Virtual UC Davis](#) to find resources related to health and well-being, academics, basic needs (food and housing) and more.

6) Disclaimer

Unexpected events might require elements of this syllabus to change. Your instructor will keep you informed of any changes.