



Preliminary Syllabus (as of: 1. September 2025)

Seminar on Responsible Leadership (Nr. 4113)

Autumn Term 2025

Course Objective

A globalized business world poses numerous challenges for business leaders, decision makers, managers, and employees. Leading in a responsible and sustainable manner has become one of the major challenges managers need to deal with. Triggered by recent developments including high-scale business scandals and an ever-increasing societal pressure for companies to operate responsibly and sustainably, those working in organizations frequently feel the need for guidance when it comes to simple questions like 'What does responsibility mean?', 'Why be responsible?', 'How can I be responsible?', 'What organizational structures and processes enable me to be responsible?', etc. At the same time, being able to deal with these challenges, pressures, and questions offers a wide range of opportunities for business leaders to develop sound strategies, create long-term value and sustainability, and to have a positive impact which makes a difference.

The class sessions will be interactive, with emphasis on discussion. Students will be expected to write a seminar paper and prepare a presentation.

The objective of this course is to familiarize students with the challenges and opportunities of responsible leadership. Students will thereby

- Learn to understand the current debates on the responsibility and ethicality of leadership in the global business environment
- Reflect about responsible leadership in general and their own leadership values in particular
- Understand and learn ways to engage with the challenges of leadership
- Train your analytical, reflective, holistic, and creative thinking

Lecturer

Dr. Stefan Schembera

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Administrative Details

The seminar will take place in blocks over 5 days.

Dates & Location

Preparatory day

- September 17 (14:00-18:00) KOL-N-1



Block 1

- October 29 (13:00-19:00) KOL-H-309
- October 30 (09:00-14:45) KOL-H-309

Block 2

- November 26 (13:00-19:00) KOL-H-309
- November 27 (09:00-14:45) KO2-F-173

In the preparatory day, there will be an introduction into the course topic and outline, and the assignment of topics for student presentations. To get credit for the course, students have to write a seminar paper, present their findings to the class, and participate in the seminar meetings. The successful completion of the seminar accounts for **3 ECTS-Points**, which can be credited to MA: BWL 5. The students will be provided access to the reading material at the beginning of the course.

The deadline for handing in the seminar papers is January 9, 2026.

The papers have to be written in English.

All questions concerning the seminar can be directed to: stefan.schembera@ru.nl

Introductory Literature on How to Write Scientific Papers:

Bänsch, A., & Alewell (2020). *Wissenschaftliches Arbeiten* (12th revised ed.). München: Oldenbourg.

Huff, A. S. (1999). *Writing for scholarly publication*, Thousand Oaks. USA: Sage.

Huff, A. S. (2009). *Designing research for publication*. London: Sage.

Sachs, S., & Hauser, A. (2002). *Das ABC der betriebswirtschaftlichen Forschung: Anleitung zum wissenschaftlichen Arbeiten*. Zürich: Versus.

For further guidelines on how to write scientific papers, please refer to the “Downloads” box on the homepage of the chair of Professor Scherer: <http://www.business.uzh.ch/professorships/as/themenliste.html>

Handbooks Related to the Seminar Topics:

Crane, A., & Matten, D. (2019). *Business ethics: Managing corporate citizenship and sustainability in the age of globalization*. (5 ed.). Oxford University Press.

Doh, J. P., & Stumpf, S. A. (2005). *Handbook on responsible leadership and governance in global business*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

Maak, T., & Pless, N. (2006). *Responsible leadership*. New York: Routledge.

Moody-Stuart, M. (2014). *Responsible leadership: Lessons from the front line of sustainability and ethics*. Scheffeld: Greenleaf.

Northouse, P. G. (2016). *Leadership: Theory and practice* (7 ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Scherer, A. G., & Palazzo, G. (2008). *Handbook of research on global corporate citizenship*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

Yukl, G. & Gardner, W. L. (2019). *Leadership in organizations* (9 ed.). Harlow: Pearson.

A Note on Plagiarism

Plagiarism is defined as the use of another person's ideas, knowledge, or language without appropriate crediting of the source. Plagiarism is theft of intellectual property and therefore is a serious offense. It cannot be tolerated in academic work. Any evidence of plagiarism in a student paper will result in a failing grade for the course. It is also inappropriate to use very long quotes from an author even if the material is properly cited and enclosed in quotation marks. Such a practice raises the possibility that students do not really understand the material they are quoting. Ideas should be expressed in the students' own words except for the occasional use of quotations from other sources to highlight or support specific points. For further information see the *Harvard Guide to Using Sources* and its guidelines on avoiding plagiarism.

Course Outline

In the following, you will find the themes we will address during the course. The readings listed under each theme provide those of you who do the presentation with a preliminary introduction to the literature in that field. These texts will be provided to you by the course instructor. The students preparing the presentations should also do further literature research.

The following research questions can guide you in preparing your presentations as well as your papers:

- (1) What is the theoretical/scientific relevance of the phenomenon you study?
- (2) What is the practical relevance of the topic you analyze?
- (3) What are the challenges for responsible leaders in relation to the topic you analyze?
- (4) What are possible (theoretical) solutions?
- (5) How and why have responsible leaders managed existing challenges in practice?
- (6) What are theoretical and practical implications that can be derived from these theoretical and practical solutions?

Grading Weights

Seminar Paper	60%
Presentation	30%
Attendance and participation in class discussion	10%

Session outline

Please note that the sessions and the literature suggestions provided for the sessions will not always refer explicitly to the term responsible leadership, or even leadership. This does not mean it is not relevant for responsible leadership. When preparing your presentations and papers, you can refer to the terms used in the specific literature you are drawing on. However, you might want to try at some point linking the discussion back to our overall theme of responsible leadership.

Preparatory day (September 17)

Session 1: Introduction to course & topic of responsible leadership – by instructor & Christian Vögtlin

In this first session, we will get to know each other and discuss the outline of the course.

We will then get familiar with the idea of responsible leadership.

For this purpose, we will first analyze how leadership has evolved over time and what the current challenges for responsible leaders are.

In a next step, we will learn how the concept of responsible leadership extends the one of ethical leadership.

We will develop an understanding of the basic dimensions of responsibility for business leaders and discuss the implications of various forms of responsible leadership. In addition, we will get familiar with a three-roles model of responsible leadership.

The content introduced in sessions 1 and 2 will provide the starting point for further discussions.

References:

Northouse, P. G. (2016). *Leadership: Theory and practice* (7 ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Voegtlin, C. (2016). What does it mean to be responsible? Addressing the missing responsibility dimension in ethical leadership research. *Leadership, 12*(5), 581-608.

Voegtlin, C. & Crane, A. (2021). Responsible leadership types. Audencia Business School, University of Bath.

Voegtlin, C., Frisch, C., Walther, A., & Schwab, P. (2020). Theoretical Development and Empirical Examination of a Three-Roles Model of Responsible Leadership. *Journal of Business Ethics, 167*(3), 411-431

Yukl, G. (2012). *Leadership in organizations* (8 ed.). Harlow: Pearson.

Session 2: Introduction into seminar papers and allocation of topics for student presentations – by instructor

In this closing session of the preparatory day, we will first discuss some guidelines on how to write a seminar paper. We will then introduce and allocate the topics for student presentations.

Day 2 (October 29)

Session 3: The responsible leader as an expert (student presentations)

Topic 1: Leadership and management

The first topic deals with the responsibilities of leaders toward to organization and task achievement. It thereby touches upon the discussion between leader and manager. The aim is to critically reflect on the potential difference and overlap between the two terms and from there on, to highlight challenging aspects around structuring tasks, assigning responsibilities and coordinating efforts.

References:

Kent, T. W. (2005). Leading and managing: It takes two to tango. *Management Decision, 43*, 1010-1017.

Kniffin, K. M., Detert, J. R., & Leroy, H. L. (2020). On leading and managing: Synonyms or separate (and unequal)? *Academy of Management Discoveries, 6*(4), 544-571.

Marta, S., Leritz, L. E., & Mumford, M. D. (2005). Leadership skills and the group performance: Situational demands, behavioral requirements, and planning. *The Leadership Quarterly, 16*(1), 97-120.

Topic 2: The responsible leader as a moral person and a moral manager

The aim of this topic is to extend the previous discussion by focusing on how leaders can achieve their and their teams' goals by paying attention to ethical and moral implications. The discussion thereby draws on the ethical leadership research in organizations and highlights the complementary aspects of the leader as a moral person and a moral manager and the influence of the leader as a role model across the organization.

References:

- Brown, M. E., Treviño, L. K., & Harrison, D. A. (2005). Ethical leadership: A social learning perspective for construct development and testing. *Organizational Behavior And Human Decision Processes*, 97(2), 117-134.
- Schaubroeck, J. M., Hannah, S. T., Avolio, B. J., Kozlowski, S. W. J., Lord, R. G., Trevino, L. K., Dimotakis, N., Peng, A. C. (2012). Embedding ethical leadership within and across organization levels. *Academy of Management Journal*, 55(5), 1053-1078.
- Trevino, L. K., Brown, M., & Hartman, L. P. (2003). A qualitative investigation of perceived executive ethical leadership: Perceptions from inside and outside the executive suite. *Human Relations*, 56(1), 5-37.
- Trevino, L. K., Hartman, L. P., & Brown, M. (2000). Moral person and moral manager: How executives develop a reputation for ethical leadership. *California Management Review*, 42(4), 128-142.

Session 4: Guest lecture (by Jessica Geyer) & working on seminar papers

To get inspiration for your seminar papers, a former student and participant of this seminar (Jessica Geyer), will present her former seminar paper, which has now been published in the form of a book chapter:

- Geyer, J., & Schembera, S. (2023). How stakeholder influence corrupted public leadership in tackling the COVID-19 outbreak in Ischgl. In A. Stachowicz-Stanusch, W. Amann, C. Hauser, M. Kleinhempel, & S. Tripathi (Eds.), *Corruption, crime and the COVID-19 – The global kaleidoscope* (Vol. Forthcoming). Routledge.

The second part will be dedicated to discussing ideas and questions for the topic of your seminar paper. This session will include an introduction into the basics of conducting an empirical qualitative analysis. We will discuss the distinct steps of the empirical research process and place particular focus on case selection, as well as on data collection and analysis. If we have time left, students may get first hands-on insights on coding interviews, using transcripts of interviews with leaders of SMEs and MNCs conducted by the instructor in Europe and Asia Pacific. We will discuss the student experiences as well as ways to deal with confronted challenges.

References:

- Gioia, D. A., Corley, K. G., & Hamilton, A. L. (2013). Seeking qualitative rigor in inductive research: Notes on the Gioia methodology. *Organizational Research Methods*, 16(1), 15-31.
- Schnell, R., Hill, P. B., & Esser, E. (2011). *Methoden der empirischen Sozialforschung*: Oldenbourg Verlag.

Day 3 (October 30)

Session 5: The responsible leader as a facilitator (student presentations)

Topic 3: Leadership: Motivating employees through charisma and vision

The focus of this topic will be on how leaders can motivate employees. It will discuss one of the most influential leadership approaches, transformational leadership, that has repeatedly been shown to have a positive influence on employee motivation. The aim is on the one hand to highlight the benefits of engaging employees in a transformative way, and on the other hand, to caution against the potential downsides of charismatic, transformational leadership.

References:

- Bono, J. E., & Judge, T. A. (2003). Self-concordance at work: Toward understanding the motivational effects of transformational leaders. *Academy of Management Journal*, 46(5), 554-571.
- Bass, B. M., & Steidlmeier, P. (1999). Ethics, character, and authentic transformational leadership behavior. *Leadership Quarterly*, 10(2), 181-217.
- Howell, J. M., & Avolio, B. J. (1992). The ethics of charismatic leadership: submission or liberation? *Academy of Management Executive*, 6(2), 43-54.

Topic 4: The dark side of leadership: Abusive supervision

This topic will focus on the dark side of the leader-follower relationship. The opposite of responsible leadership could be considered what has been called abusive supervision, i.e., leadership that uses non-physical aggression against followers, often for personal gains. The aim is to highlight abusive forms of leadership and show their negative outcomes on followers.

References:

- Liao, H. Wee, E., & Liu, D. (2017). Shifting the power balance with an abusive boss, *Harvard Business Review*, October 09, 2017.
- Tepper, B. J. (2007). Abusive supervision in work organizations: Review, synthesis, and research agenda. *Journal of Management*, 33(3), 261-289.
- Tepper, B. J. (2000). Consequences of abusive supervision. *Academy of Management Journal*, 43(2), 178-190.

(If room: Group work - Charisma Exercise)

Day 4 (November 26)

Session 6: The responsible leader as a citizen (student presentations)

Topic 5: Responsible leadership as successful stakeholder engagement

In this session, the focus will be on the interaction between responsible leaders and organizational stakeholders. Specifically relevant in this regard is discussing the ways through which responsible leaders can engage with stakeholders and the challenges of such an engagement.

References:

- Doh, J. P., & Quigley, N. R. (2014). Responsible leadership and stakeholder management: Influence pathways and organizational outcomes. *The Academy of Management Perspectives*, 28(3), 255-274.
- Maak, T. (2007). Responsible leadership, stakeholder engagement, and the emergence of social capital. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 74(4), 329-343.
- Pless, N. M., Maak, T., & Waldman, D. A. (2012). Different approaches toward doing the right thing: Mapping the responsibility orientations of leaders. *Academy of Management Perspectives*, 26(4), 51-65.

Topics 6 & 7: CEO activism

These topics place an emphasis on the increasing engagement of company leaders in political discussions by taking a public stance of issues of public concern. The aim is to highlight the implications of such an engagement and to critically reflect on the role of a leader as an activist.

Topic 6: CEO activism - What is it and what are its financial consequences?

References:

- Bedendo, M. and Siming, L. (2021), To Advocate or Not to Advocate: Determinants and Financial Consequences of CEO Activism. *British Journal of Management*, 32, 1062-1081.
- Chatterji, A. K., & Toffel, M. W. (2019). Assessing the impact of CEO activism. *Organization & Environment*, 32(2), 159-185.
- Mkrtchyan, A., et al. (2024). "CEO Activism and Firm Value." *Management Science*, 70(10), 6519-6549.

Topic 7: CEO activism – How legitimate is it and what are its societal consequences?

References:

- Branicki, L., Brammer, S., Pullen, A., & Rhodes, C. (2020). The morality of “new” CEO activism. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 170, 269–285.
- Chatterji, A. K., & Toffel, M. W. (2016). CEO Activists Make a Difference? Evidence from a field experiment. Harvard Business School Working Paper, No. 16-100, March 2016.
- Fewer, T. J., & Tarakci, M. (2025). CEO political partisanship and corporate misconduct. *Academy of Management Journal*, 68(2), 357-379.
- Hambrick, D. C., & Wowak, A. J. (2021). CEO sociopolitical activism: A stakeholder alignment model. *Academy of Management Review*, 46(1), 33-59.

Session 7: Guest lecture on Elon Musk (by Dorothee Winkler)

We will have a guest lecture, Dorothee Winkler from FH Bern. In the first part, she will discuss the case of Elon Musk in light of current responsible leadership challenges. In the second part, she will prepare questions and steer the discussion.

Session 8: Leadership and culture (student presentations)

Topic 8: Managing integrity and compliance: The role of the Chief Integrity Officer

Leaders can have a strong influence on the organizational culture and the compliance with rules and regulation. In this session, the relation between leadership, integrity and compliance will be carved out. A specific focus is on the changing role of compliance/integrity officers in influencing the “right” kind of culture.

References:

- Paine, L. S. (1994). Managing for organizational integrity. *Harvard Business Review*, 72(2), 106-117.
- Schembera, S., & Castro, A. (2024). From anti-bribery lawyer to SDG (Sustainable Development Goals) manager: The changing role of the compliance officer in multinational corporations. In W. Amann, C. Hauser, M. Kleinhempel, R. Saccani, A. Stachowicz-Stanusch, & S. Tripathi (Eds.), *The changing role of the Chief Compliance Officer*. Routledge.
- Trevino, L. K., Weaver, G. R., Gibson, D. G., & Toffler, B. L. (1999). Managing ethics and legal compliance: What works and what hurts. *California Management Review*, 41(2), 131-151.
- World Economic Forum. (2021). *The rise and role of the Chief Integrity Officer: Leadership imperatives in an ESG-Driven World*. <https://www.weforum.org/publications/the-rise-and-role-of-the-chief-integrity-officer-leadership-imperatives-in-an-esg-driven-world/>

Topic 9: Cross-cultural challenges of responsible leadership

This topic focuses on the cross-cultural differences and challenges of responsible leadership. Different cultures have different ideas of responsibility. The aim is to discuss the challenges of leading responsible across cultures by highlighting especially the influence of cultural characteristics on leadership.

- House, R., Javidan, M., Hanges, P., & Dorfman, P. (2002). Understanding cultures and implicit leadership theories across the globe: an introduction to project GLOBE. *Journal of World Business*, 37(1), 3-10.
- Schembera, S., Haack, P., & Scherer, A. G. (2023). From compliance to progress: A sensemaking perspective on the governance of corruption. *Organization Science*, 34(3), 1184–1215.
- Waldman, D. A., Sully de Luque, M., Washburn, N. T., & House, R. J. (2006). Cultural and leadership predictors of corporate social responsibility values of top management: A GLOBE study of 15 countries. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 37(6), 823-837.
- Witt, M. A., & Stahl, G. K. (2016). Foundations of responsible leadership: Asian versus Western executive responsibility orientations toward key stakeholders. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 136(3), 623-638.

Day 5 (November 27)

Session 9: Leadership and culture - continued (student presentations)

Topic 10: (Ir)responsible leadership in multinational organizations

This session highlights the specific challenges responsible leaders face when managing multiple expectations and objectives. This will be illustrated by the specific focus on multinational companies that operate in multiple cultural and regulatory environments, and hence face a multitude of heterogeneous and partly contradictory stakeholder expectations.

References:

- Löscher, P. (2012). The CEO of Siemens on using a scandal to drive change. *Harvard Business Review*, November 2012, 39-42.
- Schembera, S., & Scherer, A. G. (2017). Organizational strategies in the context of legitimacy loss: Radical versus gradual responses to disclosed corruption. *Strategic Organization*, 15(3), 301-337.
- Scherer, A. G., Palazzo, G., & Seidl, D. (2013). Managing legitimacy in complex and heterogeneous environments: Sustainable development in a globalized world. *Journal of Management Studies*, 50(2), 259-284.

Topic 11: Responsible leadership in small- and medium-sized enterprises – by student(s)

This session highlights the specific challenges responsible leaders face in small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that are typically characterized by scarce resources and informal organizational structures and processes.

References:

- Baumann-Pauly, D., Wickert, C., Spence, L. J., & Scherer, A. G. (2013). Organizing corporate social responsibility in small and large firms: Size matters. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 115(4), 693-705.
- Chouinard, Y. (2016). *Let my people go surfing*. The education of a reluctant businessman. Penguin books.
- Schembera, S., & Scherer, A. G. (2024). Values as drivers for fighting corruption at SMEs in global business. (*Under review*)

Closing & reflection on seminar papers

This final session will be dedicated to a summary of the course and an open discussion. Students will also have the opportunity to discuss open questions and problems regarding the development of their seminar papers. First, students may raise questions in the plenary that appear of general relevance. Later, we will have time for one-on-one feedback regarding more specific questions.