



Bringing Corporate Political Responsibility into Business School Classrooms

How -- and why -- to equip the next generation of business leaders with the skills to navigate the complexities of principled corporate engagement in the public sphere

*Gabriel Correa Acosta
CPR Independent Study*

*Prof. Tom Lyon
University of Michigan
Stephen M. Ross School of Business*

Gabriel Correa Acosta is a recent graduate of the Stephen M. Ross School of Business at the University of Michigan, receiving a Bachelors of Business Administration in 2023 and a Masters of Supply Chain Management in 2024. He originally wrote his paper on Bringing Corporate Political Responsibility into Business School Classrooms as an independent study project for Prof. Tom Lyon. The paper was influenced by conversations at a Corporate Political Responsibility workshop hosted by the Erb Institute at the University of Michigan, with participation by the Alliance for Responsible Capitalism.

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Foreword

I can credit the creation of this report to several conversations, meetings, and workshops that marked my journey in corporate political responsibility from academic theory to actionable insight. It reflects a synthesis of my academic experiences at the University of Michigan, pivotal interactions with industry thought leaders, and the crucial role of education in shaping the business leaders of tomorrow.

In April 2023, I attended a workshop organized by the Erb Institute at the University of Michigan on the subject of Corporate Political Responsibility. The organizers invited the Alliance for Responsible Capitalism (ARC), founded in part by two MIT Sloan Graduates, Amy Gobel and Russ Furthuber. They talked about many topics that I had discussed in courses at U of M that focused on sustainability, such as climate change, labor laws, and the transition towards electrification.

What stood out most to me was the conversation around corporate involvement in our country's politics and policy making, a concept I had covered in my courses, but not at such level of detail. I talked with Russ after the event about our shared interest in these topics and how I want to be a catalyst for change. A couple of months after that, I began a series of weekly conversations with ARC about how to make firms more aware of the importance of their political commitments, and how they go beyond supporting candidates that will support favorable policies.

Going to that workshop made it clear to me how today's business school students will be tomorrow's business leaders, and why they need a holistic understanding of how individuals, businesses, and governments interact to enact these changes. In order to enable this kind of understanding, there needs to be a change that goes to the very root of it all: education. We need to understand that citizens, businesses and government all operate in the same environment, not in isolation. Beyond the private sector, we need to acknowledge the role of government in finding solutions to societal issues. Only in that way can we reach a level of change that neither government or corporations could achieve by themselves.

I was fortunate enough to have taken two courses with Tom Lyon at Michigan, who has been a leader in promoting the idea of corporate sustainability space, and the first to coin the term. I thank him for his support in this project. It was a fulfilling way to end my time at Michigan. This work gave me the opportunity to interact with the world of academia and taught me how the world of policy and business interact. I would also like to thank Amy and Russ at ARC for their support ever since our first meeting. Faculty in other top business schools also helped, offering insights from their research, access to syllabi to assess the possibilities for teaching this concept outside of Michigan, and support for the cause.

This report is not just a reflection of my journey but a call to action for students, educators, and industry leaders alike to embrace corporate political responsibility in all its complexity. By fostering an environment that encourages dialogue, critical thinking, and holistic understanding, we can equip the next generation of leaders with the tools needed to navigate the interplay between corporate actions and the well-being of society.



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Ultimately, this report is designed to support business educators in bringing CPR into the business school classroom, in response to student interest and its relevance to business management in the coming years.

These three quotes from business professors who shared their thoughts with me as part of this project, sum up the need and the opportunity:

Too many business leaders have lamented the extent to which government is not functioning properly, but they conveniently ignore the role they are playing in creating that dysfunction. CPR acknowledges that role and tries to correct it. While there is a great deal of effort directed at companies to address climate change by reducing their individual carbon footprint, one of the most important steps they can take on this front is to turn their lobbying and government influence efforts towards helping the government steer the entire market towards addressing those problems.

Andrew Hoffman, Holcim (US) Professor of Sustainable Enterprise, Stephen M. Ross School of Business, the School for Environment & Sustainability, University of Michigan, personal conversation (March 2024)

Business engagement in the political and regulatory arena is necessary for the rules of the game to be written in a way that promotes value creation and innovation. However, business leaders today live in glass houses, so they must learn to engage as transparently as possible. In addition, business leaders are subject to public pressure from competing societal stakeholders, which they also must negotiate. Incorporating CPR in business school teaching provides students with a framework to manage both challenges and, therefore, is key to succeeding as a business leader today.

Nicola Persico, John L. and Helen Kellogg Professor of Managerial Economics & Decision Sciences, Kellogg School of Management, Northwestern, personal conversation (March 2024)

Corporations and humans alike depend on fair and well-designed laws and on well-functioning legal systems to protect our rights and enable productive engagements at scale. When corporations are involved in the political process that shapes the writing and enforcement of rules, there must be a framework of accountability to ensure that their influence serves the public interest and adheres to democratic principles. The goal must be a system in which everyone is civic minded and acts responsibly and no one abuses their power, including corporations and their leaders. Otherwise, neither the market system nor democracy can deliver on their promise.

Anat Admati, The George G.C. Parker Professor of Finance and Economics, Director of the Corporations and Society Initiative, Stanford Graduate School of Business, Stanford University, personal conversation (March 2024)



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Introduction

In today's rapidly changing business environment, students must be equipped to tackle tomorrow's toughest challenges. High on the list of challenges is the growing influence of corporations in establishing the policies and regulations that constitute the "the rules of the game" of business and markets. Corporations spend millions of dollars annually to influence policy and politics. This influence may be directed toward crafting favorable regulations for their industry's or company's narrow goals making things more difficult for competitors or levelling the playing field for competition and real value creation. Yet, despite the importance of corporate political activity, it is largely absent from the curriculum at most major business schools.

The inattention to corporate political activities is especially unfortunate in view of its increased scale and relevance. For example, the US Supreme Court ruling in *Citizens United vs FEC*, which lifted the limits on corporate political spending. Before the ruling, outside spending (nominally independent from a candidate's efforts) was only 8 percent of total federal electoral spending. After the ruling it rose to 22 percent². Failure to consider this reality deprives students of an understanding of how our capitalist system truly operates. Not only that, but far beyond the business school classroom, the growing influence of corporations on politics is a significant factor in eroding trust in government. Data from the Pew Research Center show that less than 25 percent of Americans currently trust the federal government, among the lowest trust measures since the research started in 1958 (Pew Research Center 2024). Additional studies by Pew show that money in politics is the top national concern for Americans (Pew Research Center 2025). Declining trust in government has contributed to a growing crisis of confidence in modern democratic capitalism as a whole.

As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, yet more politically polarized, it has become increasingly risky for corporations to engage in political activity. As an example, corporations that have taken a stance on investments in fossil fuels have sometimes faced major divestments by dissenting shareholders. Yet other shareholders oppose action on fossil fuels or sustainability issues more broadly, leading to pressures such as antitrust lawsuits facing banks for using their market power to coerce climate action. This contentiousness has, in turn, extended the risk of political activity beyond reputational damage to direct financial harm.

And yet completely withdrawing from the political realm is an unrealistic option for companies. Continuing with the theme of fossil fuel investments, some states have announced plans to divest government pension plans from fossil fuels, while other states have enacted prohibitions on working with financial institutions that boycott fossil fuel companies. Financial institutions seeking to do business with states may therefore be pushed to articulate a clear position.

The ability to navigate this polarized landscape is critical for business leaders, especially in light of the increasing distrust of civic institutions mentioned above. When executives lack the skill-set or expertise needed to address political issues at the corporate level, their responses to growing distrust will be less than optimal and their activities will be perceived as poorly aligned with their



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public statements – further fueling distrust and exacerbating risks to business activity and to the well-being of society (Doty 2023).

The gap between skills and responses reflects a deeper gap in today's business education. This report aims to take a step towards closing it, something that is crucial since today's business school students will become the corporate leaders who take these major decisions tomorrow. To better equip tomorrow's leaders for the challenges they will face, the Erb Institute at the University of Michigan hosted a Corporate Political Responsibility Taskforce (CPRT) from 2021-2024. The taskforce was dedicated to articulating a set of principles for responsible corporate political behavior that set a new norm of CPR for all business firms.

An Overview of Corporate Political Responsibility

We cannot discuss corporate political responsibility without first defining corporate political activity (CPA). CPA encompasses any activity by a corporation to influence the political process, whether in the form of direct spending on campaigns, putting out information that will have implications for the political process, or indirectly by outsourcing these efforts to lobbying professionals or trade associations (Lyon 2023). People tend to focus on how legislative and regulatory policies constrain corporate action, but they tend to forget that companies themselves often play key roles in shaping those very policies.

In 2018 Tom Lyon first defined corporate political responsibility as the practice of employing corporate political activity to advocate policies that benefit both the company and society at large (Lyon et al. 2018). That definition has been expanded over time to include all aspects of the responsible use of a company's influences in the public sphere, such as carefully weighing when to engage, aligning political influences with other company commitments and obligations, communicating openly, and striving for a net positive impact on the economic, civic and natural systems on which free enterprise depends.

Working with the CPRT corporate members and a broad range of academics, business networks and advocates, the Erb Institute has distilled four key principles of CPR:

- **Legitimacy: Firms' political activities reflect legitimate use of resources and authority, and an authentic basis for engaging.** This means that a company's political activities must reflect the firm's official views—not private opinions of executives—and must comply with all legal requirements. Companies should not pressure employees, shareholders, or other stakeholders into supporting political causes. Engagement must be grounded in an authentic rationale, drawn from at least one of three criteria: the company has contributed to the issue; the issue affects the company's operations, stakeholders, or commitments; or the issue threatens core societal systems, and the company can help. This principle ensures that political involvement is both justified and aligned with corporate responsibility.
- **Accountability: Firms are accountable for their political activities, actively striving for alignment with their commitments to purpose, values, stated goals and stakeholders.** This includes actions taken directly or through trade associations and third parties. Firms are expected to establish governance systems that oversee political activities, consult affected stakeholders, minimize risks, and regularly



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assess alignment. When misalignments occur, companies must take proactive steps to correct them and provide ways for stakeholders to voice concerns. Beyond these responsibilities, firms are encouraged to show leadership by engaging a broad range of stakeholders and thoughtfully incorporating their views into political strategies and activities.

- **Transparency: Firms communicate openly and honestly about their political activities to promote informed stakeholder decision-making and public trust.** This principle includes disclosing direct and indirect political spending, governance policies, and efforts to correct misalignments. Firms should also explain their positions, goals, consultation practices, and affiliations. Additionally, they are expected to provide accurate, timely information to policymakers to support effective decision-making. Transparency ensures that corporate influence is visible, accountable, and aligned with democratic values. Compliance with existing disclosure rules may not be sufficient, since current rules are permissive of “dark money” spending and are weak on reporting of lobbying activity (Lyon and Mandelkorn, Chapter 3, in Lyon, ed., 2023.)
- **Responsibility: Firms’ political activities demonstrate active support for the systems on which the economy, society and life depend.** This principle includes promoting fair market rules, responsible competition, and alignment with the public good. Firms should uphold democratic institutions, the rule of law, civic freedoms, and equitable political participation. Their policy advocacy must be grounded in good faith, evidence, and peer-reviewed science. Companies must also avoid contributing to environmental harm, human rights violations, or other adverse impacts. They can show leadership by promoting unbiased civic engagement and participating in public discourse to advance the common good. In a sense, Responsibility represents the top “layer” of CPR, the expectations that go beyond the more procedural levels of Legitimacy, Accountability and Transparency.

Though these principles were developed with business input, they may still seem lofty. They build on decades of prior work in the sphere of CPR. For example, the Center for Political Accountability, alongside the Wharton School and its Zicklin Center for Business Ethics Research, has led the way in creating a new norm of public disclosure around corporate political spending (Center for Political Accountability 2024). The Center has also developed a Framework for companies and their boards to follow in their political spending (Center for Political Accountability 2025). And other changes are in the air. In 2019, the Business Roundtable, an association of CEOs that has long supported free-market and pro-business policies and endorsed the principle of shareholder primacy, modified its definition of the purpose of a corporation to include making a positive contribution to all of its stakeholders rather than shareholders alone.

It is important to recognize that CPR offers substantial benefits for companies. The Center for Political Accountability emphasizes that campaign spending creates a risk-management problem for companies, especially in today’s highly polarized political environment. Stakeholders become upset when they find that a company is giving money to politicians whose positions are antithetical to core values the company says it stands for. That, in turn, can cause share prices to drop and top employees to exit. Similar problems can arise if it emerges that a company has been lobbying for policies that do not align well with its stated values. In today’s online environment, it is increasingly difficult for companies to hide where their money goes and how they use their lobbying clout. If activist stakeholders don’t dig up the truth, disgruntled insiders may do it for them.



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Furthermore, CPR is intended as a non-partisan approach within which companies can consider the policy and political environment they need to create the most long-term value. Dramatic shifts in political winds challenge companies' ability to plan ahead and mitigate risks. For example, the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) created incentives for companies to invest in US-based manufacturing, but the second Trump administration's proposed rollbacks of IRA funding jeopardized the return on those investments. CPR offers companies an approach to defining positions and engaging constructively in these tense policy discussions.

Suggestions for including CPR in the Classroom

A case-study approach, long established in business schools, is the best way to introduce this new concept into the classroom. The case method not only invites students to discuss the issues from their own points of view but also allows them to collaborate in framing new approaches or in debating ideas. Politics is a complex process, and there is seldom a "correct" answer to how a company should behave in any given political situation. There is no "cookbook," and students may come up with widely differing recommendations. A case-based approach allows students to explore various approaches, better equipping them to deal with ambiguity when they become the actual decision makers.

The following questions will help students identify the key elements of a situation when assessing how to apply CPR to a specific case. The questions invite students to explore how each of the CPR principles applies to a given case.

- 1) ***Legitimacy***- is it appropriate for company X to contribute to the discussion of the issue in question?
 - a) Has the firm or any of its stakeholders caused or contributed to this issue through practices, statements, or other activities?
 - b) Is this issue at all related to, or does it affect, the purpose or key activities of the firm or its stakeholders? Is it of strategic importance to them?
 - c) Does this issue pose a threat to the systems on which society, the economy, and life itself depend? Does the company have the capabilities to meaningfully mitigate this threat?
- 2) ***Transparency***- how much information does the firm disclose to stakeholders about its political activity?
 - a) Who are the relevant stakeholders regarding the issue for the company in question?
 - b) Why do each of the stakeholders care about the information? What benefit do they get from clear and accurate information?
 - c) Has the company been clear about its stance on the issue of concern?
 - d) What research might stakeholders need to conduct to connect all relevant pieces of information about the company's actions?
 - e) Will lack of transparency have a consequence, such as a fine or criminal charges? Would there be indirect consequences in the form of stakeholder outrage if the company's behavior became public?



- f) Does the company have channels to address stakeholder concerns in a responsive and inclusive manner? If not, should it create them?
- 3) **Accountability**- is the company's political influence on this issue aligned with its values, purpose, business goals, and commitments to all stakeholders involved?
- a) What does alignment mean in this case? What are the relevant commitments to consider? Values and purpose? Business goals? Stakeholders?
 - b) What mechanisms are in place to ensure alignment?
 - c) Are there key performance indicators or other metrics to track these commitments?
 - d) Who are the key decision makers responsible for the company's public-facing actions?
 - e) Who are the key decision makers responsible for the company's less visible actions?
 - f) How much alignment/misalignment is there between these sets of parties
 - g) What role does the Board play in overseeing the company's political decisions?
- 4) **Responsibility**- do the company's political activities support the systems on which the company depends for its success?
- a) Does the company's proposed position strengthen free markets and competition? Trusted civic institutions? Healthy civic discourse? Natural systems? Are these interests in tension and how should the company reconcile them?
 - b) What implications do alternative political actions have for each stakeholder, these systems and for the public at large?
 - c) What mechanisms could the firm put into place to address any negative effects or perceptions of its actions?
 - d) What mechanisms would allow the firm to take credit for the positive effects or perceptions of its actions? Does the company issue a corporate political engagement report? If not, should it consider issuing one?
 - e) Do the company's proposed political actions steer it away from past commitments or statements or further align its stance?
 - f) What evidence supports the company's position? How strong is it?

Caselets

The Erb Institute's Corporate Political Responsibility Taskforce has compiled [a list of short cases](#) that deal with issues that have had a significant impact on the national political climate and opportunities for corporate political activity. These were developed with the idea that "caselets" – short cases based on public documents – are easier to integrate into an existing course than traditional case studies. The cases below were selected as representative of the challenges in managing corporate political influence.³¹ As they age, educators might ask students to identify more current cases as a classroom activity.

- 1) **Blackrock and ESG Investing:** This case focuses on BlackRock's approach to Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) investing. It examines how BlackRock responded to criticism of its ESG

¹ Educators may also want to explore [TheCPRHub.org](https://www.thecprhub.org) for more current case examples over time.



investing, the implications of ESG backlash within the investment community, and the strategic decisions made by BlackRock.

- 2) **UN Global Compact on Child Labor Laws and Packers Sanitation Services:** As the United Nations tightens its expectations around child labor, some US states and businesses face criticism for attempts to loosen existing child labor laws. Packers Sanitation Services paid \$1.5 million in civil penalties for employing children between the ages of 13 and 17. Some argue that less strict regulations can better equip children to enter the workforce. Some state lawmakers seek to relax regulations in cases where doing so is not preempted by federal law.
- 3) **Disney and the State of Florida:** This case explores Disney's confrontation with Florida Governor Ron DeSantis over that state's Parental Rights in Education Act. The case highlights the ethical challenges that arise when businesses positions or values clash with government policies. It invites examination of corporate advocacy, perspectives on human rights and the complications arising when political contributions do not align with stated corporate values.
- 4) **Legal Liabilities and Oil Companies:** This case discusses legal and social pressures that oil companies face to account for their actions and communications concerning climate change and its effects on their own operations and the global energy supply.
- 5) **Microsoft and Political Giving:** This case addresses the strategic decisions that corporate boards make regarding political giving. It focuses on Microsoft's reaction to the events of January 6th as an example of how an employee caused a shift in corporate political donations. Comments by Microsoft's president, Brad Smith, are used to highlight some of the motivations behind the company's political donations.
- 6) **Toyota and Political Giving:** Toyota became a focus of media attention after the January 6th attack on the capital because the company had been the largest corporate donor to Congressional representatives who refused to recognize the outcome of the Presidential election. The resulting stakeholder pressure led Toyota to reverse some of its campaign spending decisions. The case explores the repercussions on the company's competitive position.
- 7) **Facebook and First Amendment Rights:** During the COVID-19 pandemic, Facebook faced increased pressure to monitor false content. This case focuses on the social media giant's struggle to balance content moderation against freedom of speech. It showcases the tension between tech companies' responsibilities to their users and to society at large, and the challenges of regulating digital platforms without infringing on fundamental rights.
- 8) **PR Firms, Big Oil, and Greenwashing:** This case examines the role of public relations firms in shaping the public image and reputation of oil companies. It focuses on accusations that PR firms have aided the greenwashing efforts of Big Oil. It explores how some creative employees on whom these firms rely are starting to refuse to work on oil company campaigns. Questions raised include how these companies can retain top talent and what clients they should serve to maintain alignment with their values. The case challenges students to consider how companies can ensure social responsibility, transparency, and accountability.
- 9) **The Uber Files:** This case explores how, in building its market position, Uber engaged in significant amounts of lobbying and influenced the policies of many countries. Now, newly disclosed documents show some of this lobbying involved practices that exposed their employees and drivers to risk, such as using information about public officials, destroying company information or hiding information from authorities. It invites students to explore the consequences of having these practices exposed, and implications for future leadership.



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- 10) **Uber, Lyft, and Abortion Laws:** After the Supreme Court’s decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health*, which reversed *Roe v. Wade*, many states imposed more restrictive abortion laws. In some of these states, Uber and Lyft drivers have been sued for giving patients rides to clinics. Both rideshare companies have pledged to pay for their drivers’ legal fees on the grounds that they had no involvement with the reason a person might be taking a ride. The case invites discussion of whether this argument will hold up in court, and whether the companies should pursue alternative positions.
- 11) **Utilities Groups and Political Spending:** Investigators have shown that utility companies contributed millions of dollars to 501(c)(4) organizations, commonly known as “social welfare organizations.” Since they are permitted to engage in political activities, they often serve as “dark money” groups, to influence state energy policies. This case highlights the ethical and legal implications of those transactions. At the same time, it illustrates the complex ways in which corporate financial activities influence governmental decisions with an emphasis on the challenges of ensuring transparency and accountability in corporate political activities.

Video Modules

In addition to the caselets, the Erb Institute’s CPR Taskforce has compiled [a library of short videos](#) from its Expert Dialogue series that are suitable for classroom use. The following section provides specific suggestions of both caselets and videos for each course area in the business school curriculum.

Course Topics and Suggested Cases

The following lists of courses in major subject areas in business education are based on courses found in top business programs in the United States such as Michigan, MIT, Stanford, among others.

BUSINESS LAW AND ETHICS COURSES

This area includes core courses in Business Law and Ethics and electives and electives in Law of Business Organization, Legal Aspects of Entrepreneurship, Ethics of Business, Law of Marketing, and Law, Technology and Public Policy

Any discussion of CPR needs to consider the legal implications of corporate political activity. Courses in business law and ethics are an ideal place to explore this intersection between law and ethics. Is simple compliance with the law the floor for expectations, as many in society think, or is it the ceiling, as some companies still see? Beyond compliance, looking at CPR through a legal lens should include examination of whether a company acts in good faith, in accordance with the law, and for the benefit of its stakeholders. Students should also explore any potential dissonance between legal requirements and stakeholder expectations. They should analyze to see what it teaches about setting both legal precedents and societal expectations for how business operates, including the long-term implications for the company and the society in which it is embedded.



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Cases appropriate for the Business Law area emphasize the way laws influence corporate political activity and illustrate how that activity, in turn, can open the door to new codifications or reassessments of existing laws. Discussions of the cases should highlight each stakeholder's interpretation of current laws as laid out in the courtroom. Each case centers on the way companies deal with the legal implications of actions they have taken and the ethical dilemmas associated with their interpretation of the law.

Recommended Cases

1. UNGC Child Labor Laws and Packers Sanitation Services Inc
2. Disney and the State of Florida
3. Legal Liabilities and Oil Companies
4. Facebook and First Amendment Rights
5. Uber, Lyft and Abortion Laws

Recommended Videos

1. [CPR And the Law: Human Rights, Fiduciary Duty and Sustainability Governance](#)
2. [CPR and The History of Corporate Political Rights](#)
3. [How Fiduciary Duty Applies to Political Influence](#)
4. [ESG, Fiduciary Duty and Addressing Externalities](#)
5. [CPR & Fiduciary Duty](#)

BUSINESS ECONOMICS AND POLICY COURSES

This area includes core courses in Macroeconomics and the Business Environment and Applied Microeconomics, and elective courses in Economic Decisions and Games, Non-Market Strategy: Shaping the Rules of the Game, Health Care Markets and Public Policy, The Firm and the Non-Market Environment, and Health Economics

The impact of corporate political actions on the economy is another important aspect of assessing Corporate Political Responsibility. Those impacts may take the form of changes in policy or shifts in upstream or downstream markets. Students should use elements of economic theory from the course to analyze these impacts. For example, students could use quantitative methods to relate lobbying efforts to trends in supply and demand in markets where the firm operates. The ways in which economic policy shapes and constraints business activity (international trade, industry regulation, antitrust laws) are another important topic for analysis. Finally, the cases and videos can be used to drive home the point that business plays in shaping the rules themselves. In sum, business economics is rich in opportunities for bringing CPR into the curriculum.

Cases for the courses under the Business Economics category typically focus on the implications of current or proposed policies for corporate decision making and political activity. Exploring the impact of proposed policies leads naturally to a discussion of what policy changes companies might prefer to see with a short-term lens, a long-term lens or a societal lens -- and how they might use



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their political influence to achieve those changes. Each case goes into the details of a significant policy issue in recent history that was relevant to business performance and political action.

Recommended Cases

1. Blackrock and ESG Investing
2. UNGC Child Labor Laws and Packers Sanitation Services
3. Disney and the State of Florida
4. Legal Liabilities and Oil Companies
5. The Uber Files

Recommended Videos

1. [Defining CPR for Economic & Business Issues](#)
2. [Corporate Political Responsibility and The Economy: Revisiting 'Pro-Business' Advocacy](#)
3. [How Policy Affects Commercial Determinants of Health](#)
4. [Using the EN-Roads Simulator to Explore Why Companies Should Prioritize Climate Policy](#)
5. [Climate Policy & The Friedman Doctrine](#)

FINANCE COURSES

This area includes core courses in Financial Management and elective courses in Financial Markets and Human Behavior, Capital Markets and Investment Strategy, Power in Finance, and Fixed Income Securities and Derivatives

Exploring CPR in finance courses is important for understanding the financial implications corporate political activities. Students can assess those activities in terms of the risks and returns entailed in political contributions and lobbying efforts. They can also examine the degree to which a firm's financial interests are aligned with its ethical obligations towards stakeholders and the broader societal impacts of those activities on society. Students will learn how finance-related political activities influence corporate reputation and long-term sustainability. In sum, the goal is to understand how such activities fit within the broader scope of corporate governance and ethical finance, exploring the tension between financial gains and maintaining integrity in the political arena.

Recommended Cases

1. Blackrock and ESG Investing
2. Legal Liabilities and Oil Companies
3. PR Firms, Big Oil, and Greenwashing
4. Utility Groups and Political Spending



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Recommended Videos

1. [CPR Versus Shareholder Value: Is There Really a Debate?](#)
2. [Why CPR Matters to Shareholders](#)
3. [Externalities, Corporate Political Influence & Risk](#)
4. [CPR, Externalities and Fiduciary Duty: Why Investors Are Concerned About Corporate Impacts on People and Planet](#)
5. [ESG, CPR, And Sustainable Finance: How Should Companies Prepare?](#)

BUSINESS STRATEGY COURSES

Courses in this area include core courses in Corporate Strategy and Competitive Strategy, and elective courses in The Power of Prestige: How Status and Reputation Confer Competitive Advantage, Business in Democracy: Advocacy, Lobbying and the Public Interest, Financial Communication and Investor Relations, Federal Taxation and Managerial Decisions, Strategy Beyond the Market, and Reputation, Regulation, and Communications: How Media Influences Business.

Courses in the Business Strategy category focus on holistic assessments of corporate initiatives such as entering a new market, launching a new product, or making changes in internal resource allocation. How do those actions contribute to getting ahead of the market and to capturing the maximum possible value? How do they affect not only the firm itself, but the greater market and the actions of competitors? It is important not to neglect the political dimensions of strategy, since political activity often has implications that are not immediately apparent. The goal is to draw on concepts from the other courses such as law, ethics, and policy in order to assess how corporate actions affect all of them simultaneously. Business strategy courses should view CPR not simply as short-term crisis mitigation strategy, but as a way to strengthen a company's position in the market by managing political risks and opportunities.

We recommend cases for business strategy courses that emphasize decisions that have broad implications for their existing strategies and the development of action plans to implement them, including CPR as part of those plans.

Recommended Cases

1. Disney and the State of Florida
2. Microsoft and Political Giving
3. Toyota and Political Giving
4. PR Firms, Big Oil and Greenwashing
5. The Uber Files
6. Utility Groups and Political Spending

Recommend Videos

1. [CPR and Business Strategy in a Hyperpolitical World](#)
2. [The Business Resiliency Case for CPR](#)



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ERB INSTITUTE
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN



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3. [The ROI of Values](#)
4. [The Meaning of “Net Positive”](#)
5. [Why Business is \(Really\) Being Asked to Step In So Often](#)
6. [Addressing Pay-To-Play Politics: A Conservative View on The Need for Political Reform](#)
7. [A Different Approach to Influence: Non-Giving as A Viable Government Relations Strategy](#)

BUSINESS AND SOCIETY, SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY, AND SUSTAINABILITY COURSES

This area includes elective courses such as Business and Society, Strategies for Sustainable Development, Reexamining the Form and Function of Modern Capitalism, Is the Internet Broken? The Political Economy of Climate Change, and Economics of Energy, Innovation, and Sustainability.

Business schools today have responded to the recent focus on corporate social responsibility and social justice by developing many new courses. Many of them are based on the premise that corporations have a responsibility to deliver value to a wide range of stakeholders beyond their shareholders. CPR is already a central feature of some, but not all of these courses. However, this guide urges that even more be done to use CPR as an approach to deeper scrutiny of ethical issues and the alignment of corporate political activity with what the company stands for, the way it operates, and what the claims it makes to the public.

Cases suggested in the Business and Society, Social Responsibility, and Sustainability area will focus on themes of environmental sustainability, business ethics, democracy, and social justice, and the intersection of business and these themes. The cases often explicitly include considerations of corporate political activity. In that way, the cases provide insights into how corporations can navigate the complex interplay between market forces, regulatory frameworks, and community expectations in a way that contributes to societal well-being and sustainable development.

Recommended Cases

1. Blackrock and ESG Investing
2. UNGC Child Labor Laws and Packers Sanitation Services
3. Disney and the State of Florida
4. Microsoft and Political Giving
5. PR Firms, Big Oil and Greenwashing
6. Uber, Lyft and Abortion Laws

Recommended Videos

1. [Net Positive Advocacy: Co-Creating Policies That Enable Better Outcomes for All](#)
2. [Corporate Political Responsibility & The Economy: Revisiting ‘Pro-Business’ Advocacy](#)
3. [CPR Versus Shareholder Value: Is There Really a Debate](#)
4. [Re-Thinking Business’ Role in U.S. Polarization and How CPR Can Help Companies Respond](#)
5. [Common Areas of Climate Policy Misalignment](#)
6. [Trade Association-Member Collaboration for Sustainability Policy: A New Model?](#)
7. [Addressing Structural Inequity: The Need for Policy Thought Leadership at the Board Level](#)



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Conclusion

The purpose of this report has been to emphasize the importance of corporate political responsibility in the classroom. For adequate coverage, it would not be enough simply to add an elective course on CPR, or even a required course. Instead, discussion of the accountability, legitimacy, transparency, and responsibility with which corporations engage in political activities should be a theme throughout the business school curriculum.

After all the specific recommendations regarding courses, cases, and videos, I will conclude the key takeaways for business educators.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Today's business graduates must have the skills they need to tackle tomorrow's toughest challenges, including understanding how corporations influence the rules of the game of business and markets.
- One critical skill area is the new field of "Corporate political responsibility (CPR)," the practice of employing corporate political influence responsibly, to advocate policies that benefit the firm, its shareholders, and society at large.
- Corporations can view CPR not just as a new expectation imposed on corporations from without, but as a practical strategy that offers concrete benefits to the company and its immediate stakeholders through risk management, strategy enablement and reputational management.
- CPR is relevant to a broad base of business courses, especially those that involve analyzing the business environment. A case study approach, including traditional cases, caselets, and videos, is the best way to implement CPR across the business curriculum. The paper includes specific case and video suggestions.

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