Course Description

Imagine that two years after graduating from UC Berkeley you are: Running a start-up clothing company that sources garments from factories in Bangladesh – how do you ensure that the clothes bearing your brand are made under ethical working conditions? Or, working for a social media platform and the Thai government asks you to take down a user’s post critical of the Thai king – what criteria do you use to balance the government’s interests against those of the user’s freedom of speech? Or, selling a life-saving cancer drug developed by a biotech company that carries a price that is a barrier to access for many of those that need it – how and what criteria do you use to assess the interests of consumers, the company, and other stakeholders?

Today, business leaders face these and other human rights dilemmas on a daily basis. Through interactive exercises, debates, scenarios and role play, we will put you in the shoes of a fast growing community of business managers whose job it is to make sure that their companies do not abuse human rights. Applying over 20 years of experience advising leading companies on human rights, we will provide you with the knowledge, skills and tools to identify and address a company’s human rights risks and to leverage the power of business to advance human rights around the world. Through guest lectures, students will have the opportunity to engage first hand with business leaders and human rights advocates dealing with these issues on a daily basis. This course, one of the first of its kind offered at a business school, will prepare students for this growing field of practice at the intersection of business and human rights. It is designed to meet the following learning objectives:

- Provide students with an overview of the international human rights framework and global business and human rights standards and guidelines
- Give students a full understanding of the ways in which companies can impact human rights negatively and positively
- Enable students to critically assess the degree to which companies are and should be responsible for human rights impacts
- Give students the knowledge, skills, and tools to effectively manage corporate human rights impacts as corporate human rights managers, external consultants, or civil society advocates.
- Practice the communication and persuasion skills necessary to successfully address emerging issues within a complex multinational corporation.


Roger McElrath has extensive professional experience delivering impactful consulting and research services to companies and other organizations on critical social, community, and environmental issues. His work at BSR in the area of human rights has included a leadership role in developing and implementing methodologies for calculating living wages in multiple countries, assisting in the development of a human rights assessment tools for the extractives and agricultural industries, conducting field-based human rights risk assessments, and providing detailed advice to companies on the content and implementation of supply chain codes of conduct. Roger holds a Master’s degree from the George Washington University in International Affairs.