ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY AT SHIPPENSBURG UNIVERSITY
CONSULTING PROJECT:
INDUSTRY, COMPANY, COMMODITY CHAIN ANALYSIS WITH SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT

PLEASE READ THE ENTIRE ASSIGNMENT CAREFULLY BEFORE YOU BEGIN!

RATIONALE
The purpose of this project is for you to analyze the geographic, business, economic, and environmental characteristics of an industry of your choice, a company that participates in that industry, and a product that the company produces. The scale of your analyses in this project will be multi-faceted. Most industries are, at some level, international in scope and scale, while, at the same time, companies acquire their inputs, add labor, and market products at scales that range from the local to the global. Companies also sell to specific customers in particular places and times. The environmental impacts of both producing and consuming are complicated both in time and space.

To accomplish your goal, your mission is to pick an industry that interests you, and to first analyze that industry on a national, and if possible, international scale. Second, you will pick a major company that competes in that industry and analyze the company’s operations (and if applicable, its competitors) from geographic, business, and environmental perspectives. Finally, you will pick a product that the company produces and perform a “commodity-chain” analysis, following the finished product from “mine to waste heap” so to speak. By the time you complete this assignment, you will have developed the skills needed to conduct simple industry, company, and product research, and further, developed a practical understanding of how business and geography “mix” within the global economy and environment.

ASSIGNMENT
Write a brief (5 page, single-spaced) memo describing the key geographic, market, and environmental characteristics of an industry of your choice. Choose a company, and analyze their geographic and marketing strategy (i.e., how and where in the world do they compete, who they compete against, etc.). Finally, choose a product that the company produces and perform a commodity chain analysis that describes where the raw materials or key ingredients come from, what type of manufacturing/other processes are involved in producing that product or service (and of course, where those activities take place), how and where the final sold item is marketed, and “where” the product ends up at the end of its life.

Support your five-page memo with a series of attachments as you see fit. The only restrictions are that you must include at least one map, one table, and one graph (though I strongly suggest more than just three attachments to get full credit). Again, try to be as creative as you can as to the information that you collect and the ways in which you present it. Refer to the Sample Memo for details regarding form and style. Please note that your project must be fully-referenced. This means you must cite all of your sources that you use both in the text of your memo and on all attachments. Use the information I have provided on D2L for all the details on this – and ask if you have any questions. FAILURE TO CITE YOUR SOURCES PROPERLY WILL RESULT IN AN AUTOMATIC FAILING GRADE FOR THE PROJECT.

Your project will consist of your memo, a series of attachments, and a full bibliography. Be sure to follow the stylistic guidelines I have provided you in the Sample Memo and the rubric. The major thing you are trying to accomplish is to give your reader a solid idea of how an industry, company, and product fit into the global economy at a variety of scales. It is important to remember that you are an analyst – not an advocate. This means that you need to collect data and information and assess it as fairly as you can.

THE MEMO
You have several critical tasks to perform in only 5 pages. You will have to choose the amount of space to devote to each, but make sure that you do a complete, but succinct job at each. Note that you do not have to label your sections exactly as I have done below. In fact, it is probably better if you come up with your own headings that are more descriptive and meaningful.
The first thing that you will need to do is choose an industry, company and product. It is critical that you pick something you are interested in. Once you have decided on this, do some initial research, but be prepared to change your focus. You may find that it is more difficult than you thought to gather information on one industry, but easier on another. Trial and error is o.k., but you need to start thinking about this project right away so that you don’t find yourself stuck with little time to work on it.

1. Introduction
In this short section you must introduce what your memo is about, how you went about researching it, and a general idea of your key finding(s). This must all be done in a few sentences.

2. Industry Analysis
What is the overall industry that you are concerned with? Your choice here is critical as it will guide the context of your paper in terms of geography, economics, environment and competition at various spatial scales.

3. Company Analysis
Once you have an overall industry chosen, what company will you focus on? How and where do they compete in the world across their various product and/or service lines?

4. Commodity Chain Analysis
Once you have your industry and company picked, choose a product/service your company produces as a case study, and perform a "commodity chain" analysis. A commodity chain analysis follows a product from mine to market to landfill focusing on the geographic and economic origins of the inputs, to the transportation and coming together of the raw materials, to the production of the product, to the intermediate and final sales to customers, and finally as waste material. Knox and Marsten (2000: 86) have defined a commodity chain as ‘networks of labor and production processes whose origin is in the extraction or production of raw materials and whose end result is the delivery and consumption of a finished commodity’.

The focus of your research will surely be based on the WWW and Ship’s library resources. As you "drill-down" and focus more specifically on the company and a product, you may want to contact your company directly. Perhaps the best place to start is to find their Web Site. Frequently, various documents (such as annual reports) will be available to help you. Also look for contact information. Most companies have public relations offices that are responsible for dealing with inquiries from consumers and researchers. But make sure you have done your homework before you make contact -- that is, make sure that you have conducted preliminary research so that you know enough to ask the right questions. It may be a good idea to contact some of your company’s competitors as well, since you may be able to find additional “inside information” out about your industry. Often, company representatives will have literature that they can make available to you, so be sure to ask. When you contact companies about your research, always be completely honest about who you are, what you are doing, and why.

5. Environmental and Sustainability Considerations
This really should not be a separate section, but rather be infused throughout all of your work. You should choose carefully the environmental/sustainability aspects you want to focus on. In part, this will be driven by the information you can find and where your interests lie. In the end, however, you want to give your reader a picture of how your industry, company and product impact our world from an environmental perspective and the ways in which they embrace (or not) the sustainability concept.

6. Review
Remember that the objective of the memo is to provide me with the information I need about your industry, company, and product by conveying what you, as an industry/product expert, think is most important. Remember to offer a solid summary at the end of your memo. What did you find, and what does it mean?
7. The Attachments

Again, you will probably be basing a lot of what you write in the memo on the attachments that you create. You will need to walk a fine line here, however. If you include too many attachments, the reader will never look at them all. If you have too few, you will not be able to tell your story as effectively as you would like. It will be quite likely that you have so much information that you will have to make difficult choices about what to include and what not to include, and, what the best way is to represent your data. As stated above, the only restrictions on your attachments is that (1) they must include at least one map, one table, and one graph (though again, I would suggest you strongly consider more than that to get full credit), and (2) you may not copy other sources and attach them as your own. Again, all of your attachments must have citations and you need to be sure to discuss each of them in the text of your memo. Your attachments much be produced by your group. All attachments must have sources included on them.

Attachments are appended to the end of your memo in the sequential order they are introduced in the text of your work. The attachments should continue the pagination from your main document.

8. The Bibliography

For this project, I would expect that you should have about 15 references plus 5 refereed sources for a total of 20. Again, your bibliography should continue your page numbers.

SUGGESTIONS

As you analyze your industry/company/product, you may want to think about some of the following to guide your research. For the most part, these are only suggestions.

- How do you define your industry? This is critical for your analysis. For example, if you chose airlines is the industry "airlines" or is it "transportation"? There is a big difference!!

- What is the history of the industry and how did it develop?

- What major firms compete in the industry -- where are they strong? What are their histories? While you are going to be choosing one company to focus on, it is often useful to talk about other major players too in order to give your reader a better idea of how the industry operates.

- What are the major product lines in the industry?

- What can you say about the geographic scale and location of the industry in the USA and elsewhere?

- What are the current trends, debates, and issues in the industry?

- What kinds of facts and figures can you provide to give the reader a sense of how the industry operates?

- What are the resource issues associated with the creation of the product? Where are the resources located and what are the environmental consequences of mining or producing them? What are the wastes involved in production? What happens to the product when its useful life is over? What do the industry and company do well from an environmental/sustainability standpoint and what do they do poorly.
OTHER INFORMATION

You compile your project as follows, stapled with no report cover.

1) Your memo.
2) Your attachments. Each attachment must be discussed in the narrative of your memo in the order in which it appears.
3) Your bibliography. Note that this is your final bibliography – NOT your annotated bibliography.

OTHER RESOURCES

This overview gives you the basics. You will not be able to complete this project without carefully reading all of the very detailed technical information regarding this project that is available on D2L. This information is in the “project” section of our class D2L site.