Strategic Management Seminar- Bus 695
On-Line Spring, 2011
March 21-May 29

NOTE: March 26th on campus “meet and greet” for those who would like to meet.

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I COURSE DESCRIPTION:

The Strategic Management Seminar is the culminating course for the Experienced Professional MBA program. It is designed to integrate the business disciplines, utilizing the principles of strategic thinking. As the final course it examines a range of complex issues that business people must handle in order to be effective, and explores how various business disciplines interact with each other in today’s dynamic global world. A good understanding of finances, international management, marketing, and economics is assumed.

The class is designed for fully employed, experienced students and assumes a certain level of maturity and understanding by the student. A four pronged approach is employed to develop critical thinking and facilitate implementation of strategic thinking: text, cases of various kinds, discussion, and a final firm analysis.

Learning Outcomes. By the end of the course a student will:

- **Use standard tools to assess** a firm’s environment, current business position, resources, competitive capabilities, the caliber of its strategy, and opportunities for gaining sustainable competitive advantage at a firm and corporate level.
- **Craft viable strategies** in a variety of competitive situations and successfully identify implementation problems and solutions.
- **Enlarge his or her decision judgment** to include cultural and ethical issues when making strategic decisions at a firm and corporate level.
- **Hone his or her ability to apply theoretical concepts to real situations** in a dynamic, complex global world.

**TEXTS:**


Weekly articles posted on Blackboard. Many of them will be from the WSJ, so a subscription is a good idea. We have student rates.
Class members are encouraged to read from the following: *Academy of Management Journal*, *Strategic Management Journal*, *The Economist*, *Fast Company*, *Business Week/Fortune/Forbs*, and *The Wall Street Journal*. I am especially interested that you keep up with major articles covered in the Wall Street Journal. We have a special rate if you do not already subscribe.

**COURSE GROUND RULES:**

Although this is an on-line course, there is nothing “easy” about it. Students in this course have the same responsibilities and obligations as those in a traditional course and in addition, must perform each and every week. An on-line course requires determination and an eagerness to learn. If you are not a self-starter, or are a procrastinator, than this course will be a challenge for you. There is no place to hide in an on-line course.

I will try to stay in communication with you as a group or individually. The process of strategic thinking is hard, but you are not alone. We do this together. However, talking to me is not a substitute for getting the JOB DONE. Since this is a graduate course, students are expected to be self-motivated, read all the material weekly, and contribute depth and substance to the discussion.

Each student is a member of a discussion team. Your classmates and team depend on you to do your share of the work. Do not wait until they contact you - take the initiative to contact them. DO NOT LEAVE YOUR TEAM HANGING AND NOT KNOWING IF YOU ARE GOING TO CONTRIBUTE OR NOT.

**Symbols:**

? **Assignments to be answered in Discussion Board**

**GRADING:**

A. Class Discussion on-line (Ind.) (*9 weeks, 25 pts per week*)

B. Lead On-Line Case Discussion (Group)

C. Case discussion (*5 cases x 10 pts*)

D. Living Case (Ind.) (*50 pts*)

D. Final Organizational Analysis (Group)

* Draft: *environmental, financial analysis* (*25 pts each*)

* Final paper (*200 pts*)
TOTAL POINTS - 645 pts


THE CLASS WEEK:

The class week runs from Monday morning (12:00 a.m.) to Sunday night (11:59 p.m.). The extra minute is in cyberspace. Discussions begin Monday a.m. and end on Sunday p.m.

Assignments are due Monday morning (12:00 a.m.) or Wed morning (12:00 a.m.). Check Schedule for details.

Monday 12:00 am
- Case discussion questions
- Living Cases

Wed 12:00 pm
- Written Case Analyses from group that is leading case discussion
- Final paper section drafts

Post these through the Safe Assign link in the week they are due

MASTERY OF THE CLASS:

Mastery of this class means that a person understands the issues of, and relationships between, the strategic topics from week to week and from the beginning of the semester to the end. He or she is able to recognize issues and relationships when they appear in an organization and to viably critique others’ discussion of the relationships. Finally, the master is able to use the class material to figure out good responses to strategic problems (implementation).

In short, to get an A in this class, a student must demonstrate the Level 3 and 4 abilities of Bloom’s Taxonomy of Learning. Bloom’s Taxonomy is posted in Resources.

II. DETAILS OF DISCUSSION BOARD COMPONENTS

Details for a particular assignment are posted in Class Content in the week it is due. If the assignment goes throughout the semester, the information is in Resources.

A. CLASS DISCUSSION ON-LINE

On-line case discussion will be held every week and will be graded. One way a student demonstrates mastery of the text and the articles is by applying them during class discussion.
The discussion week is from Monday 12:00 a.m. to Sunday 11:59 p.m. Case questions and Living Cases will be posted by Monday at 12:00 a.m. on the week they are due. Discussion on the case ends the following Sunday at 11:59 p.m.

**Every week, each student** will contribute four or five well-thought-through comments that extend the discussion. *Both the textbook and the readings for that week should be used in those comments.* A **Grading Guideline For Comments** and examples of “A-level” comments are in the Resources folder on the Blackboard.

**Specifics:** Answer the questions posed by the group leading the discussion by talking about what the text and the readings say on that subject. Use both text and readings each week. Cite your source of information or insight. After you have discussed the question using the text material, extend the discussion by utilizing your experience, material from past weeks, or material from the internet. See the Guideline for other ideas.

When quoting or paraphrasing Dess, Lumpkin, Eisner or an article, cite the page number using the APA system. Example (Smith:47). You are welcome to use DLE as an abbreviation for Dess, Lumpkin, Eisner since we all know what it means. Otherwise do not abbreviate. All comments must be your own work, or else you must cite the source of the comment. Using uncited information or insights from anyone else in any form is plagiarism.

There are many case analyses available on the internet and otherwise, including Datamonitor and Yahoo. **Do not use them.** The point of doing case analysis discussion is to figure things out for yourself. Most of the analyses you find on the internet comes from MBA students like yourself. Some of the analysis is bad and most of it is outdated. You are as qualified as anyone to analyze firms. SafeAssign is quite good at catching this, and I don’t want an innocent “gee, I am too busy this week” to derail your MBA as it has too many in just this past year.

**To repeat:** For the cases, do NOT use any analysis from anyone else (Information, yes. Analysis, no). This includes any analysis of the case found on the internet, copied from friends, or bought on street corners from strangers. If any such material is found to be used, your discussion or analysis will get a grade of 0. So please don't.

**B. FACILITATING CASE ANALYSIS AND ON-LINE DISCUSSION**

1. **Facilitate Discussion.** Every other week, an assigned group will facilitate on-line discussion of a case. The group will use the case to help the class apply the readings and learn the analysis tools assigned that week.

   **The discussion week is from Monday at 12:00 a.m. to Sunday at 11:59 p.m.** The group should post a variety of case questions by Monday at 12:00 a.m. Throughout the week, the group should keep the class engaged and interested by adding questions, making provocative statements, and adding case information. The format for case analysis is in DLE Chapter 13: 1) Identify the problem or issue; 2) Conduct analysis; 3) Propose alternative solutions; 4) Make recommendations. Follow this format in your case analysis.
*Guide the class through the* format for case analysis above, as found DLE Chapter 13. Use the chapter as a guide for techniques to use.

*Post open-ended questions.* Use the text material assigned that week to post open-ended questions about the firm in the case. The goal is to assist the other class members to learn the tools and analyze the case. Open-ended questions have a variety of answers and lead to better discussion. “How to Create Open-ended Questions” is posted in the Resources section of the Blackboard.

* Keep the class engaged in the case discussion throughout the week by adding links to firm websites, provocative statements, rubrics for the different tools and so forth. Help the class have fun while honing its strategic skills.

2. **Written case analysis.** After the discussion week is over, the group will submit in Assignments (SafeAssign) a 6 +/- page (plus charts and addendums if applicable), formal, written, analysis of the assigned case. Do not summarize the case. Both you and I have read it. Rather identify the problem or issue, conduct strategic analysis, propose alternative solutions, and make recommendations (DLE Ch. 13). The paper is due the Wednesday following the end of the discussion at 12 a.m.

   **Important:** *Hand in this analysis through the SafeAssign link in the week it is due.*

3. **Evaluate Group Members** using the attached rubric. A group member will get 5 points for doing the evaluation and up to 20 points depending on the evaluation from other group members.

   **Note to all students:** *All written work and recommendations for all cases must be your own work. Do not use any analysis from anyone else, including internet sources or previous classes. If any such material is found to be used, the assignment will get a grade of 0. So please don’t.*

**C. LIVING CASE PAPERS**

Every other week, each individual member of the team assigned that week will post a well-written 3-4 page paper applying something he or she has experienced or observed in one of the chapter objectives in the DLE textbook. Information from both DLE and the articles should also be used.

**Instructions for the paper:**

* Chose a topic from the DLE chapters or the articles due that week. Do not repeat the text - we have all read it. Describe how this issue or concept was applied (positively or negatively) in one of your work situations.

*Use as an example either the firm you now work for, a firm you used to work for, or a firm you personally know well (for example, a competitor or supplier). You may also use a not-for-profit organization you are or have been involved in, such as a school district, church, club, or the military. If none of these apply, contact me. Do specify the industry, but you are welcome to change names of individuals or firms to protect the guilty.*
*Use both DLE and the assigned articles in your discussion. Important: cite sources using the APA system. Example (DLE:47).

See Resources for further details.

D. ORGANIZATIONAL ANALYSIS PAPER

For the final paper, teams of one to four people will research and analyze an organization. The report will be approximately 30-40 pages. There is a short list of firms that may not be analyzed in Resources in the Blackboard, and, of course, no case information may be used. Otherwise, you may choose any firm or organization you like, including not-for-profit organizations. I must approve the company in advance, in order to prevent duplication.

I suggest you analyze an organization for which you are working, a firm whose product you enjoy, or a firm you would like to work for. Use the format below.

The grading rubric and copies of analyses from previous semesters are available in Resources on the blackboard.

1. Format for Organizational Analysis

   A. Current Situation:
      * Introduction and brief company overview

      Strategic Posture
      * Strategic history of the organization
      * Organizational mission or strategic vision
      * Current business-level strategy

      Environmental Analysis
      * Strategic history of the industry
      * Five-Forces analysis of the industry
      * Segment analysis or Industry Life Cycle analysis
      * Conclusions

      Internal Analysis
      * Value chain analysis or functional analysis
      * Financial analysis
      * Core capabilities, distinctive competencies, VRIO analysis
      * Organizational structure and culture analysis
      * Other analysis tools as desired
      * Conclusions

   Summary: SWOT (listing and explanation) and TOWS

1. For example, the Balanced Scorecard
B. Strategic Direction:
   * Identification and explanation of the key strategic issues. This comes directly out of the summary
   * Alternative strategic scenarios, each KSI
   * Recommended strategy, each KSI

C. Action Plan for each recommended strategy
   * Tactics for 1st year.
   * Who is responsible to implement each tactic.
   * Approximately what it will cost.

2. Other instructions:
   * Use both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include Stockholders Reports, company website and so forth. Secondary sources include business magazines, Wall Street Journal, etc.

   * At least one of the primary sources must be an interview with an employee of the organization conducted by the group. The interview can be in person, by phone, or on-line.

   * No information in the paper may come from a case or case analysis written in any form from any source. If such information is found, that section of the paper will receive a 0. Yes, I really do this.

   * Be careful to cite sources for all information. If your source is personal experience with the organization or industry, cite yourself. However, in an analysis paper, personal information must be backed up by public (library) information.

   * Hand in the paper through the SafeAssign.com. There is a link set up so that you can check your draft. Sometimes people get in a hurry and do not cite their information or short cut by using case analysis from the internet. Sadly, that affects the grade of the entire group.

E. ORGANIZATIONAL ANALYSIS: INTERMEDIATE (draft) ASSIGNMENTS

Each Analysis Team will hand in two drafts of sections in the Organizational analysis paper. The grading templates for these sections are on Blackboard in the week the draft is due. Submit the drafts through the SafeAssign link in the week the draft is due.

1. Industry Analysis. Hand in a complete analysis of the industry your organization is in. “Complete” means a sophisticated analysis of the Five-forces model, a complete segment analysis and summary/conclusions. Reminder: Cite sources for all information using the APA citation system. If your source is personal experience with the industry, say so. However, private information must be backed up by public (library) information.

2. Financial analysis. Hand in a complete financial analysis of your company. “Complete” means that the appropriate financial ratios were used, three years were trended, there are industry
averages for the financial ratios, and that there is a good explanation of the trends discovered – i.e. the specific management decisions that led to the ratios. **Reminder:** Cite sources for all information using the APA citation system. If your source is personal experience with the company, say so. However, private information must be backed up by public (library) information.

**LATE ASSIGNMENTS: NOT APPLICABLE. THE ASSIGNMENT IS EITHER THERE OR IT IS NOT.**

**ACADEMIC HONESTY:**

Your attention is called to the section of the ULV Catalog entitled “Academic Honesty.” Any student found to be violating this section of the catalog will be given a zero for the assignment and/or will earn an F in the class. There is a “no tolerance” standard in this course for academic dishonesty. Using uncited information or analysis from any source other than the person whose name is on the paper is considered to violate this standard.

**SAFEASSIGN**

All assignments in this class, except the Living Cases, will be turned in through the SafeAssign links on Blackboard. SafeAssign compares submitted papers to others on the internet to determine originality. Students should be aware that when papers are submitted to SafeAssign they are archived indefinitely in that online database.

The reason for this instruction is straightforward. There are many MBA case analyses floating around, including analysis of cases from our book. Occasionally a student is tempted to hand one of them in as his or her own work. This is cheating and it is also unfair to the rest of the class.

For a group assignment, if one person uses material not acceptable, everyone fails. Please be aware of that for peer control.

The point of the class is to learn to do your own analysis. You are as qualified as anyone to do it, but you must learn how. You can put one draft of a paper through SafeAssign.com without the paper being archived if you use the draft mode. This might be wise to do if you are working with a group. Papers in draft mode will not be graded.
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## Class Schedule

Note: Schedule is tentative. Instructor reserves right to change it if situation warrants.

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<td>Case 4: The best laid plans, using Chapter 4 in discussion.</td>
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