

Strategic Management-401 Sections 4, 5, and 6
Spring 2002 - University of San Francisco
School of Business and Management
Syllabus v 2.0

Instructor: Bruce Heiman

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Class Meetings: See schedule.

Note: Rooms have changed. Old rooms are posted with the location of new rooms.

This document applies ONLY to Sections 4, 5, and 6 of 401.

Required Text:

De Wit & Meyer, Strategy: Process, Content, Context, 2nd Ed., Thomson Business Press

Articles and materials as distributed in class.

Other Reading:

Students are expected to review leading business publications such as the Wall Street Journal, Business Week and the Economist for current, application-oriented treatments of strategy topics. This is an important part of the class, as students are expected to develop their own cases and examples for presentation and discussion in class (see below).

Course Description and Objectives in Brief

This is a "capstone" strategy course. It involves the synthesis of many topics studied in other undergraduate business courses. Broadly speaking, this course addresses strategy formulation and situational analysis for business-unit, corporate, and entrepreneurial organizational entities. The course features a focus on international issues and implications for strategy formulation. The objective of the course is to enable a high degree of competency among students in a wide variety of strategy-related areas in multiple industries.

STUDENTS ARE EXPECTED TO CHECK THE WEB PAGE FOR THIS TWICE PER WEEK.
IMPORTANT INFORMATION NOT CONTAINED IN THIS DOCUMENT WILL APPEAR THERE.

Description in detail

This course treats an assortment of advanced topics in international business strategy. Many of the "paradoxes" encountered in international business are derived from different discipline-based points of view (e.g., economics, sociology, psychology). Tension between different prescriptive viewpoints is the focus of both the textbook and students' attention in the class. The tension can often be "resolved" by comparing several industries or firms in such a manner as to demonstrate the validity of each viewpoint given certain industry or firm conditions.

Are there, however, some strategic orientations that are more "general" (and hence "more generally useful") than others? Are there some strategic viewpoints that should be "kept on the shelf" except in rare or dire circumstances? How does one go about selecting a strategic orientation for one's firm or business unit?

Objectives of the course

By the end of the course, the student should be able to

- a. Analyze firms/industries along the important dimensions of several perspectives.
- b. Recommend strategy (and implementation) based on a particular school of thought using cogent arguments.
- c. Present research and other exploratory findings and recommendations in a convincing, professional manner.

Evaluation

a. 40%: Final case. Written version: Due last class meeting, start of class. Length: maximum 12 pages double-spaced text (~3500 words). Do NOT exceed the length requirements (either number of pages OR number of words). Of the 40%, half of this amount (20%) will be decided based on the final presentation of your case; the other half of the grade will be based on the written submission. In classes where the size of the class makes it possible, this will be a group project.

b. 30%: Critical notes (6 x 5%) pertaining to specific chapters in the textbook. Due: at start of any class, but it is not allowed to turn in a critical note AFTER that chapter has been discussed in class. No exceptions. This suggests a payoff to reading ahead and attacking the critical notes aggressively. Length--1 page MAX. double-spaced, Times Roman font, 12 point font preferred, 10 point font minimum.. Yes, that is a very short length. This part of the class is an exercise in writing concisely to enable managers to quickly read and understand your thoughts. Do not submit a second page—it will not be read. Only the first page will be graded. No title pages, please. Individual efforts only for these submissions (do not work together). If you do not turn in the required 6 critical notes, any unsubmitted notes will be graded 0.

If you are unhappy with your grade for up to two critical notes (after you have turned in 6 notes), you may submit up to two extra critical notes, and the two lowest grades on critical notes will be tossed out and your grade will only reflect your six highest graded critical notes. All critical notes turned in under this condition must also meet the other requirements (notably, timing) for critical notes laid out above. That is, it is very possible to run out of time for submitting critical notes, since the student is allowed to select the chapters for which he/she submits notes. Note that the payoff for reading ahead and staying on top of the critical notes is increased by this condition.

c. 30%: In-class participation. (A) 15% participation during others' discussion leadership, (B) 15% for your own discussion leadership duties. Regarding (A), in EVERY class, each student is graded from 0-10 (10 is best) on oral participation when not presenting (we know you will talk when you present your work). Regarding (B), when it is your turn to lead the class discussion, you will be graded on the quality of your work (content, presentation), but you will also be graded on how well you stimulate relevant, insightful discussion among other students.

6. Schedule

In general, we will try to take 2 sessions for each chapter (except Section 6). Activities are broken into 2 parts (1 for each class)—(1) Student-led Review and critique of the reading, and (2) Student-led Cases and exercises related to the reading or extending the reading. In Section 6, we will do both parts in one class.

(session) date/time	Topic	Reading	Activities	Remark
22 Jan, 24 Jan	Introduction to the class.	None	Walk-through Syllabus and requirements. Teams selection, Note on citations & bibliographies, writing standards, questions. Instructor's view of strategy and essential questions—opportunism vs. good intentions.	Instructor-led.
29 Jan, 31 Jan	Introduction to Strategy (History)	Ch. 1	(1) Student-led discussion/review/critique of the literature, (2) student-led cases and/or exercises relating to chapters, (3) more on final project, questions. Student-led discussion of chapters, Old vs. New views of strategy formation. The implementation puzzle.	Are these tools still usable?
4 Feb, 7 Feb	Strategic Thinking	Ch. 2	(1) Student-led discussion/review/critique of the literature, (2) student-led cases and/or exercises relating to chapters. Rationality and its limits.	Game Theory.
12 Feb, 14 Feb	Strategy Formation	Ch. 3	(1) Student-led discussion/review/critique of the literature, (2) student-led cases and/or exercises relating to chapters, (3) team presentations of project concepts (prelim—2 min/team, 1 overhead sheet).	Process.
19 Feb, 21 Feb	Strategic Change	Ch. 4	(1) Student-led discussion/review/critique of the literature, (2) student-led cases and/or exercises relating to chapters	More process.
26 Feb, 28 Feb	Business Level Strategy	Ch. 5	(1) Student-led discussion/review/critique of the literature, (2) student-led cases and/or exercises relating to chapters (3) team updates on project progress (3 min/team, 1 overhead sheet).	Simple perspective on firm-level strategy.
5 Mar, 7 Mar	Corporate Level Strategy	Ch. 6	(1) Student-led discussion/review/critique of the literature, (2) student-led cases and/or exercises relating to chapters.	Simple perspective on corporate strategy.
12 Mar, 14 Mar	Network level strategy	Ch. 7	(1) Student-led discussion/review/critique of the literature, (2) student-led cases and/or exercises relating to chapters.	Networks operate at several levels. Identify them.
19 Mar, 21 Mar	The Industry Context	Ch. 8	(1) Student-led discussion/review/critique of the literature, (2) student-led cases and/or exercises relating to chapters.	
Spring Break				

(session) date/time	Topic	Reading	Activities	Remark
2 Apr, 4 Apr	The Organizational Context	Ch. 9	(1) Student-led discussion/review/critique of the literature, (2) student-led cases and/or exercises relating to chapters.	
9 Apr, 11 Apr	The International Context	Ch. 10	(1) Student-led discussion/review/critique of the literature, (2) student-led cases and/or exercises relating to chapters. The Globalization debate.	Can you use one perspective to express the views of the other perspectives?
16 Apr, 18 Apr	Organizational Purpose	Ch. 11	(1) Student-led discussion/review/critique of the literature, (2) student-led cases and/or exercises relating to chapters.	
23 Apr, 25 Apr	Workshop on final presentations	None.	Teams meet with instructor for advice regarding project content and presentation.	Instructor-facilitated. Possible extended office hrs this week.
30 Apr, 2 May	Final Presentations I	None	Students provide critical insights on presenters' work.	Instructor-facilitated
7 May, 9 May	Final presentations II	None	Students provide critical insights on presenters' work. Course wrap-up.	Instructor-facilitated

Note:

You also have a rare opportunity to visit an MBA class: Global trends, MBA 670, when that class has a guest speaker . This opportunity is open ONLY to students in 401-sections 4,5, and 6. The class meets on Thursdays, 1830-2115hrs in LM 344. Not all classes have guest speakers. You will be notified when there is a guest speaker, and hence an invitation to visit the class.

Assignments in more detail.

a. Critical Notes. By the end of the course, you need to have turned in six critical notes, each regarding an aspect of a chapter which we are studying in the textbook. You choose the chapters for which you will write a note. Each critical note should be 1 page long, and meet the requirements noted above. Each note should remark on at least one major assertion of the text that you believe is in error, or with which you disagree. Justify your views briefly, but in a convincing manner. Use supporting evidence from the material we have read to support your views. Outside readings are allowed and encouraged. Cite all sources (in-text and reference list). Each critical note must be submitted BEFORE the session which discusses the chapter begins (at the beginning of class). Critical notes are graded 0-10.

b. Final Project. The Final project consists of a detailed case (a real story) that explores strategy formulation and implementation using at least two of the perspectives presented during the course (from different chapters). Excellent projects will look through the lens of 3 or more perspectives and discuss the prospects for strategy critically. Describe a real strategy problem, case, or situation for your chosen firm or industry that can be described and addressed in terms of one or more of these perspectives. Your analysis should be detailed and illustrate how a specific problem or issue is addressed by applying each perspective. The perspective can be flawed (i.e., a solution is not working). In this case you should suggest an alternative perspective or a fine-tuning of the existing perspective to achieve high performance. Select a case story that will interest your fellow students. Primary research is strongly encouraged and will be rewarded (e.g., original research in the form of surveys, interviews, discussions with principals, primary data analysis, financial data, etc. Students in the class may be required to sign non-disclosure agreements for projects involving sensitive information. Graded 0-10.

c. Student-led discussions. Each student or team (depending on class size), in addition to the final case, is responsible for leading one or more class discussions pertaining to the chapter for that class meeting. Each chapter is treated in 2 parts, by DIFFERENT teams: (1) Student-led Review and critique of the reading, and (2) Student-led Cases and exercises related to the reading or extending the reading. In general, the class is oriented towards a student-driven model of education—it is up to the students to provide examples and ideas that lead the class into interesting territory for discussion and analysis.

Discussion leaders will be graded on their ability to stimulate other students' eager participation. Anything goes here: games, group exercises, quizzes, guests, etc. Student discussion leaders are strongly encouraged to go beyond the cases in the book—find other cases, or articles. Use of material strictly from the textbook will result in mediocre grades for discussion leadership. Creativity and high levels of student participation will be rewarded. At the time of the presentation, each team will submit a 1 to 2 page digest of their presentation (for distribution to the instructor AND other students). Note: an important part of this presentation is your ability to offer relevant critical reflections on the material in the text: What is wrong with the material? How could it be better? What element(s) does it fail to take into account? Are there many counter-examples to the text's assertions? DO NOT simply provide a printed copy of your powerpoint presentation to the students and instructor (though you may wish to do this in addition to what is required above).

Internationally-focused thinking is particularly interesting, though not required. If you come from a place that is interesting to the other students, or have some particular in-depth interest/experience/strength on which you can draw, you are encouraged to use this for the benefit of the other students' learning experiences.

Notes:

Assigned Reading. Assigned reading material MUST be read before class. This will not only enhance your understanding and retention of class presentations, but will equip you to participate in class discussions and team activities. Students are responsible for having a solid command of all assigned materials, whether or not they are covered in class.

Class Participation. Participation is an important part of the class, and will contribute to your grade. Opportunities to participate will arise during discussions in class. Ignoring participation will affect your grade.

Use of overhead transparencies and other media is allowed and encouraged. Notify the instructor as early as possible of any special requirements (e.g., PowerPoint-capable setups, etc.). Equipment resources are often scarce. Guidelines will be discussed further in class.

Attendance at every class is expected. If you are unable to attend on a particular day due to illness or emergency, please inform the instructor in advance by e-mail or in writing. Business-related travel is NOT a basis for an excused absence. Poor attendance WILL affect grades. Under no circumstances should students miss more than 2 classes. Differently-abled students should contact the instructor if these evaluation procedures are not appropriate.

Guidelines for Written Material:

The written material submitted is expected to show a level of scholarship appropriate for advanced undergraduate business courses. Syntax, spelling and other grammatical problems should be corrected prior to submission, and material should be carefully reviewed for clarity. Style guidelines for the main written assignments will be discussed in detail in class. Generally, students will be held to a strict professional writing standard; it is acceptable to ask a fellow student or friend to review written submissions. Late material is generally not accepted.

Important: Evidence of plagiarism may be the basis for failing the class or worse--cases will be referred to the University administration for appropriate action. Don't try it. It is NOT worth it. Plagiarism occurs when you knowingly use someone else's words or ideas without giving them proper credit. Use in-text citations and bibliographic references to avoid this issue.

Policy on re-grading material. Any material may be submitted for re-grade (except presentations). The conditions of the re-grade are as follows:

0. Before you submit something for re-grading, you should be aware, that once you submit it for a re-grade, the original grade may go up OR DOWN. Your original grade is not "safe."
1. Submit original work with instructor comments on it (if any). Also submit attached to the original work, a 1-page max. explanation of why the grade should be changed. No emails, faxes, orals, etc.
2. Instructor will review materials submitted in this format. No material will be reviewed unless it conforms to this format for review.
3. Instructor will notify you of the results of the re-grade.