B6502 STRATEGY FORMULATION  
SPRING 2014

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REQUIRED COURSE MATERIAL
Casebook

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course provides an introduction to strategic management. “Strategy Formulation” has two broad goals. A first is to understand why some companies are financially much more successful than others. Second, we will analyze how managers can devise a set of actions (“the strategy”) and design processes that allow their company to obtain a financial advantage. To gain a better understanding of strategic issues and begin to master the analytic tools that strategists use, we will study the strategic decisions of companies in many different industries and countries, ranging from U.S. technology firms to a Spanish fashion retailer and a Danish shipping company.

The course material is grouped in three modules. The first, titled “Competitive Advantage,” shows what companies can do to outperform their rivals. The second module, “Competitive Dynamics,” analyzes the competitive moves of rival firms. This module relies heavily on game-theoretic concepts. In the final module, “Corporate Scope,” we will ask when it makes sense for companies to diversify and globalize their business.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of Strategy Formulation is to allow you to analyze the sources of companies’ competitive advantage. This skill is not only critical for positions in general management but also for those who aspire to careers in banking and consulting. The course will provide the analytic tools to analyze competitors, predict competitor behavior, and understand how firms can develop and sustain advantages over time.
ASSIGNMENTS

Midterm Group Project (Type A Group), Due Monday, February 17, before class: Each group will submit a 1800 word maximum case analysis of the Samsung Electronics case. Case questions will be posted by Monday, February 10.

METHOD OF EVALUATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation</th>
<th>40%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>40%</td>
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1. Class Participation

An important course requirement is active involvement in class discussion. Your participation is essential—for both your own learning and that of other students. Because Strategy Formulation is a case-based course, much of the learning will take place in our collective discussion of the business cases. We expect that every student will arrive well prepared and able to answer the day’s assignment questions. In our experience, it is helpful to meet in study groups to discuss the case and the assignment questions before class.

The best class comments:

- Make or raise issues that are relevant to the current focus of the class
- Show curiosity and a willingness to experiment
- Use data or examples to support conclusions
- Take into consideration the ideas offered by others
- Offer support for arguments
- Help others feel safe about participating It is essential that you participate often enough so that I can assess the quality of your thinking. Once you pass a certain quantity threshold, your participation grade hinges solely on quality.

2. Midterm Group Project

The midterm project will be a group write-up of the Samsung Electronics case, due in hard and soft copy at the beginning of Session 6. You will be asked to prepare a 5-page response to the case discussion questions listed in CANVAS with your study group members.

3. Final Exam

The final exam will be on October 16. You will be analyzing a case. The exam is open book; you are welcome to refer to the course reader and your notes during the exam.
4. Absence – Sharing Materials

If you cannot attend class due to unavoidable circumstances, I expect you to send your instructor an email prior to class, notifying him of your absence. Please note that any unexcused absences will significantly impact your overall grade for the course.

I encourage students who had to miss a session to ask their classmates for notes and lecture slides. However, it is considered an honor code violation to consult any materials from past sections of Strategy Formulation. Similarly, you must not share class materials with future students.

Columbia Core Culture

The purpose of the Columbia Core Culture is to promote a consistent classroom environment of mutual respect, preparation and engagement. Our expectation of you in class is to be:

Present: Your success depends on being on time and present for the entire class every session. Attendance will be part of your grade for class participation and students are expected to sit in their assigned seats.

Prepared: Bring your nameplate, clicker, and complete any pre-work needed for class discussion. Expect the professor to cold call in class.

Participating: Active participation calls for no electronic devices such as laptops, tablet computers, or smartphones during class, except when the professor tells you as part of in-class work.

CLASS PREPARATION

This is an intensive course. I encourage group work throughout the course, particularly when working through the assignment questions for the day. Strategy is an analytical course and your preparation should reflect that fact. In preparing for strategy classes, I strongly recommend that you first read the notes for the module, then read the assignment questions, and finish with the case study. The module notes and assignment questions will help you focus on the aspects of the case that we will be discussing in class.

I will cold-call throughout the class, so be prepared to answer any questions regarding the details of the case, and to articulate your opinions about the assignment questions. Because the class is primarily discussion-based, if you have any reservations or question about participating in class at any time, I encourage you to email me to meet.
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