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# B5502 STRATEGY FORMULATION FALL 2019

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Office Hours: By appointment

Teaching Assistants: TBD

# REQUIRED COURSE MATERIAL

Casebook

# COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course provides an introduction to strategic management. “Strategy Formulation” has two broad goals. The 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 Strategy,”* we will ask when it makes sense for companies to diversify and globalize their business.

# COURSE OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of Strategy Formulation is for 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, consulting, non-profit, social enterprise, and start-up environments. 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

Group Project, Due **Friday, September 20 at 9 PM**: Each group will submit a 1,800 word maximum analysis of the Samsung Electronics case. Case questions will be posted by Sunday, September 8th.

# METHOD OF EVALUATION

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Class Participation | 30% |
| Midterm Group Project | 30% |
| Final Exam | 40% |

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. 30% of your overall course grade will be your participation grade, which is further decomposed into three components: 1) Poll question completion (10%), 2) Frequency of class participation (10%), and 3) Quality of class participation (10%).

There is one poll question for each case we will study (with the exception of the first case). Poll questions will be posted as assignments in your Canvas Calendar for Strategy Formulation. They require you to read the relevant case and give a 3-5 sentence response to an open-ended question. You must submit your *answer to the poll question through Canvas by 8 AM on the day we discuss the relevant case* in class.

Both the frequency and quality of your class participation will be affected by non-attendance. Obviously, not coming to a class means that you will not have a chance to take part in class discussion, which is a critical component of your overall grade.

In terms of the quality of participation, the best class comments:

* + Articulate a clear stance or argument
  + Make or raise issues from past classes or current events or other anecdotes that are relevant to the current discussion
  + Show curiosity and a willingness to experiment
  + Use data or examples to support conclusions
  + Help others feel safe about participating by inviting further discussion or summarizing points that have already been made by your classmates.

1. *Group Project*

The group project will be a write-up of the Samsung Electronics case that you will complete with your Learning Team. Your write-up is due by **9 PM on Friday, September 20th**. The write-up will be a response (1,800 word maximum) to the case discussion questions listed in Canvas.

1. *Final Exam*

The take final exam will be distributed on **Wednesday, October 16 at 9 AM**. You will be analyzing a case. The exam is open book; you are welcome to refer to the course reader and your notes. It is due at **11 PM** on **Friday, October 25.**

# Missing a Class: Sharing Materials

Attendance will be recorded via the in-class poll questions, which you will take using your mobile device.

If you cannot attend class due to unavoidable circumstances, I expect you to (1) send me an email *prior* to class, notifying me of your absence and (2) filling out the Office of Student Affair’s (OSA) approved absence form, the link to which can be found on the course Canvas page. 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. Therefore, for class, you will be expected 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 and complete any pre-work needed for class discussion. Expect me to cold call in class.

*Participating:* Active participation calls for no electronic devices such as laptops, tablet computers, or smartphones during class, except when it is part of in-class work.

# Tips for Class Preparation

This is an intensive course. Strategy is an analytical course and your preparation should reflect that fact. In preparing for strategy classes, we 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 debating in class discussions. For most of the cases, there is a poll questions that have to be completed before the class. So, here is how you should prepare:

1. Go to Canvas and download the case and the additional reading under **Reading.**
2. Read the **Guiding Questions** firs. Then read the case with the guiding questions in mind.
3. Go to the Poll questions and answer it.

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.

