**FOR BIDDING PURPOSE ONLY**

**B5502 STRATEGY FORMULATION (MBA)**

**FALL 2022**

**Professor Vanessa C. Burbano**

vb2399@columbia.edu

Office Hours:

Fridays (3:00 PM - 4:30 PM), or by appointment

Teaching Assistants:

TBD

**REQUIRED COURSE MATERIAL**Cases and Course Module Notes (posted online on Canvas)

**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. In all modules, we will emphasize how frameworks used to make strategic decisions might be more or less useful as firms confront technological change, digitization, and new social issues.

**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.

**METHOD OF EVALUATION**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Class Participation | 40% |
| Midterm Group Project | 20% |
| Final Exam | 40% |

*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 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. 40% 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 (20%).

There is one **poll question** for each case we will study. 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 9 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. 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. As part of your participation, please bring your cell phone to class so that you can cast your vote for in-class polls via a link that will be provided during class.

Please note that a TA will be recording student participation in class. Your participation grade will NOT be based on the TA’s records alone. The main purpose of the TA’s record-keeping is to ensure that certain students are not unfairly being given too many or too few opportunities to speak in class. In other words, the TA’s presence is meant to keep my management of the class discussion in check. In some cases, the TA’s records will be used to verify specific instances of student participation that particularly stood out in terms of quality. In terms of the quality of participation, the *best class comments*:

* Articulate a clear stance or argument.
* Raise issues from past classes or current events or other anecdotes that are relevant to the 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.

*Midterm Group Project*  
The midterm project will be a group write-up of the “Samsung Electronics” case as well as a slide presentation summarizing your write up. Your write-up is due by **10 PM on Tuesday, September 17**. The write-up will be a response (1,800 word maximum) to the midterm questions, which will be distributed to you during *the first week of class*. You must also create a three-slide presentation summarizing your write-up, also due by email to me by **10 PM on Tuesday, September 17**. Your group is your assigned learning team.

*Final Exam*  
The final exam will be on the **morning of** **Friday, October 18**. You will be analyzing a case. The exam is open book; you are welcome to refer to all of the cases, course readings, and your notes during the exam.

**Preparing for a Class Session: Expectations and Tips**  
1. Before reading a case, always read the “guiding questions” in the relevant session of your Canvas calendar.  
2. Take notes while you read the case to help you diagnose the key problems the case describes.  
3. Re-read your response to the session’s poll question, as it will almost always be part of our class discussion.  
4. Bring a printed copy of the case to class so that you can refer to it during our discussion.

**Missing a Class: Sharing Materials**Attendance will be recorded each class by the in-class poll questions and the TA. If you forget your phone, or have technical difficulties answer the in-class poll questions, please talk to me before or after class.

If you cannot attend class due to unavoidable circumstances, I expect you to send me an email *prior* to class, notifying me of your absence. Please note that any unexcused absences will *significantly* impact your overall grade for the course. In addition, the Office of Student Affairs requires that you submit a Core Excused Absence Form, the link to which can access on the course page in Canvas.

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, clicker, and complete any pre-work needed for class discussion. Please see the section, “Preparing for a Class Session: Expectations and Tips”, for more information.

*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.

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.