

M&IS 44285: INTEGRATED BUSINESS POLICY / STRATEGY

**College of Business
Kent State University
Fall 2009**

Sections 10285

Classroom: BSA 206

Time: T/Th. 9:15 – 10:30 p.m.

PROFESSOR: Dr. Jaume Franquesa

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Office hours: M: 9:00 – 9:30 p.m. & T/Th: 12:15 – 2:30 p.m.

READING MATERIALS:

Required: 1.- *Strategic Management: Competitiveness and Globalization –Concepts*, 8th edition, 2009, Michael A. Hitt, R. Duane Ireland, & Robert E. Hoskisson. (available at KSU bookstore, or at www.iChapters.com)

2.- Course pack with cases selected by the professor (available at www.shop.coursepacksetc.com).

Optional: A general business magazine or newspaper such as *Business Week*, *Fortune*, or *The Wall Street Journal* is recommended. Selected materials from these sources may be assigned from time to time.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course draws upon theoretical developments and empirical findings in the field of *strategic management* to provide an understanding of how organizations choose to compete in a given marketplace, why some succeed and others fail, and what can be done to improve a firm's competitive position and economic performance. In a nutshell, the course is about business success and failure. We will explore sources of competitive advantage and disadvantage of individual businesses and consider ways in which they could enhance their strategic position. We will also discuss sources of long-term shareholder value created (or destroyed) by diversified corporations.

The course takes the perspective of a practitioner general manager. Two main implications derive from this. First, the course is not just about concepts and analytical frameworks, but rather about their practical application to real-life business situations. Second, the emphasis of the course is on making the total organization successful, as opposed to concentrating on any single business function. As such, the course is designed to build upon previous work in the business program, providing a "total business" perspective. You will be able to integrate, and build upon material you have learned previously in your economics, finance, marketing and organizational behavior courses.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

This course provides students with the opportunity to:

- (1) Improve general business knowledge and provide understanding of the interplay among different business areas.
- (2) Learn about a number of influential strategic management ideas, concepts, principles, and analytical frameworks.
- (3) Apply these concepts, principles, and frameworks to real-life business cases.
- (4) Hone analytical skills and managerial decision-making ability.
- (5) Develop the ability to structure, present, and sustain arguments in front of colleagues, as well as the ability to listen and react to the arguments of others.

CLASS FORMAT:

The course is a broad survey of several topics of interest within the academic field known as Strategic Management. For each topic you will be assigned one book chapter and one case to prepare. Book chapters introduce concepts and managerial tools related to the topic. Cases provide real-life business situations that call for application of the concepts and tools learned. We will meet in class to discuss both kinds of materials. Accordingly, class time will be evenly split between theory and case analysis sessions.

During our theory sessions, I will review and extend what you have read in the assigned book chapters. The purpose of these sessions is three-fold: (1) To reinforce main ideas, (2) to discover and clarify any remaining misconceptions, and (3) to provide you with an opportunity to ask further questions on each topic.

During case analysis sessions, the focus will be on diagnosing what is critical in a complex business situation and on finding pragmatic solutions to the strategic and/or organizational problems at hand. We intend to benefit from group thinking and to learn from each other during these exchanges. I will take on a discussion facilitator role, guiding the group toward main discussion themes and/or asking specific questions. In turn, students are expected to introduce their own ideas and points of view, and to draw, challenge, and build upon ideas expressed by others. The liveliness and pedagogical value of these sessions will largely depend on the extent to which students engage the material and take ownership for class discussions.

WORK EXPECTATIONS:

Pages 9 to 17 of this syllabus contain a detailed course schedule, with reading assignments and study/discussion questions for each of our meeting times this semester.

For each class session, **it is expected that:**

- (1) **Students will be prepared.** For a theory session, this means having read the assigned chapter and being familiar with the concepts and tools contained therein. For a case-study session, it means having read and analyzed the case, and coming to class with a set of personal notes containing your best thinking. Study questions are provided to highlight key issues and to guide your analysis. If students are unprepared for class, written assignments based on chapters or cases will be assigned on the spot.

- (2) **Student will be active participants.** During theory sessions this means answering questions presented by the professor, asking your own questions, and volunteering experiences or insights related to the topic. You may also be called upon to talk about an issue.

During case sessions, it means contributing your own ideas as well as building upon, or disagreeing with, ideas expressed and positions taken by others. You may also be called upon to present your analysis or to lead a discussion.

You cannot be an active participant unless you are fully prepared for class.

Given work load and expectations, here is my estimate of **what it will take for you to be successful** in this course:

- (1) Assigned chapters are about 30 pages each. Accordingly, you should plan on a minimum of 2 hours of reading to prepare for a theory session.
- (2) Assigned cases are also about 20 pages each. However, preparing a case is a bit more involved and it will require a minimum of 6 hours distributed as follows:
 - (i) Review of assigned discussion questions (to be found in pages 9 to 17 of this syllabus) followed by a first read of the case –highlighting important information and making notes on the margins. The objective here is to learn about the case’s facts and to identify those that are most relevant. (2 hours).
 - (ii) A focused second read of the case (mostly you go over your prior marks and notes). The objective now is to gain further familiarity with issues pertinent to the required analysis. (1 hour).
 - (iii) Your critical analysis. Typically, you will be asked to identify and characterize the roots of problems, which will call for you to apply tools, concepts, and models introduced in the preceding theory session(s). Often, you will also be asked to propose appropriate solutions as well. Use your best thinking and try to come up with practical recommendations that make good business sense. (2 hours, minimum).
 - (iv) Producing a minimum set of notes containing your analysis and final conclusions. (1 hour).

You should bring your case notes to class with you, to support your arguments during our discussion. To the extent possible I also recommend that you meet in small, informal groups to further discuss cases before class. Experience shows that students in large class groups tend to participate more when they have adopted a position before walking into class, and when they have some smaller group that they identify with. Create a study group that meets after everyone has completed their own independent analysis of the case’s facts/issues. This will provide opportunities to present your preliminary conclusions and have others react to them, prior to the large-group discussion in class.

In sum, you should plan on investing a minimum of 8 hours per topic to prepare for class (work loads are lighter for the first 5 weeks and heavier afterwards).

EVALUATION:

| | |
|------------------------------------|-----|
| Class Participation and Write-ups: | 25% |
| Examinations: | 75% |
| First Exam: | 25% |
| Second Exam: | 25% |
| Final: | 25% |

GRADING SCALE:

Final course (letter) grades will be assigned using the new plus/minus grading system adopted by the University. Also, numerical grades for all course components will be expressed in a 4.0 scale. The equivalence between numerical and letter grades will roughly follow the same scale used by the University to award academic honor points. Specifically, the grading scale for this course will be as follows:

| | |
|-----------|------|
| 3.6 – 4.0 | = A |
| 3.4 – 3.5 | = A- |
| 3.1 – 3.3 | = B+ |
| 2.7 – 3.0 | = B |
| 2.4 – 2.6 | = B- |
| 2.1 – 2.3 | = C+ |
| 1.7 – 2.0 | = C |
| 1.4 – 1.6 | = C- |
| 1.1 – 1.3 | = D+ |
| 0.8 – 1.0 | = D |
| 0.0 – 0.7 | = F |

PARTICIPATION:

Participation is instrumental to achieving the learning objectives of the course: Obviously, participation is directly related to Learning Objective (L.O.) #5. Also, participation in case discussions relates to L.O.s #3 & #4. Finally, the active participation format provides constant incentives to be prepared for each and every class, which in turn contributes to L.O.s #1 & #2. Correspondingly, participation is an important component of your course grade.

Participation points are awarded each session. I will jot down participation during the class session itself, with the help of a seating chart. I will also review my record right after each class, while memory is still fresh, and make any necessary corrections. I am counting on your help as well to make sure that I keep an accurate record. You are invited to check participation scores with me after every class. You are also encouraged to inquire about your overall participation points during office hours, if you ever suspect that the class record may be in error.

Credit for participation will be earned as follows:

Session contributor = 1 point. When you contribute your understanding (either voluntarily or prompted by the professor), or pose interesting questions, you get one point for the session.

To promote broad participation, students don't receive multiple points for multiple contributions during a single session. You can only obtain one point per session. You should be ready and try to contribute every single class.

Prepared student = 0 points. Completing your assigned work by the date indicated in this syllabus is an absolute requirement; not a source of credit. You receive no participation points unless you go a step further and contribute your thoughts to the class discussion. I encourage you to do so.

Unprepared student = -1 point. Students are expected to have completed the assigned work for each and every class. If called upon and found unprepared, a point will be subtracted from your participation record.
Also, students' personal case-analysis notes (see below) may be collected for review at any time; or short exercises be assigned in class at the professor's discretion. Evaluation of these will be in the form of "preparedness" points (i.e., 0 or -1).

If for unexpected reasons you could not complete the assigned work for a one class, you should approach me at the beginning of the session and let me know about it. I will excuse your participation for that day and make sure not to call upon you. I will exempt you, as well, from any on-the-spot assignment/review that might take place during such class period.

REMEMBER: Any and all comments/opinions emanating from your understanding of course materials are always welcome. And you get a participation point every time you add to our discussion. One doesn't need to be "right" to make a contribution. First of all, there is typically more than one reasonable alternative solution to managerial problems. Hence, the very idea of a "right" solution is often an oxymoron in the context of this course. Second, bold proposals or somewhat faulty arguments often make most valuable contributions: The former may open a new line of argument, while the latter gives us something to work with and may trigger a clarifying an enriching debate. So, just come to class prepared and share your best thinking with us!

Your final participation/write-up score at the end of the semester will be the sum of your participation points in all sessions (plus your write-up points). A student must be prepared and be an active and persistent contributor to get a good participation grade. We will meet for a total of 26 class sessions this term (not counting our first meeting, or in-class exam dates). The opportunity to contribute is unequal, depending on the session (theory versus case). To make up for this, case write-ups are part of your participation grade. Given the size of our group, I will consider a score of 20, or more, to represent outstanding participation. The correspondence between participation/write-up points and letter grades will be as follows:

| Partic/Wrt-up Points | Numerical Grade | Letter Grade Correspondence |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 0 | 0.0 | F |
| 1 | 0.4 | F |
| 2 | 0.8 | D |
| 3 | 1.2 | D+ |
| 4 | 1.5 | C- |
| 5 | 1.8 | C |
| 6 | 2.0 | C |
| 7 | 2.2 | C+ |

| | | |
|-------------|-----|----|
| 8 | 2.4 | B- |
| 9 | 2.5 | B- |
| 10 | 2.6 | B- |
| 11 | 2.7 | B |
| 12 | 2.8 | B |
| 13 | 2.9 | B |
| 14 | 3.0 | B |
| 15 | 3.1 | B+ |
| 16 | 3.2 | B+ |
| 17 | 3.3 | B+ |
| 18 | 3.4 | A- |
| 19 | 3.5 | A- |
| 20 | 3.6 | A |
| 21 | 3.7 | A |
| 22 | 3.8 | A |
| 23 | 3.9 | A |
| 24 or above | 4.0 | A |

WRITE-UPS:

There is no format requirements for case analysis notes that you bring regularly to case sessions, as these are intended for your own personal use during the discussion (e.g., notes need not be typed –even if they end-up being collected by the professor). The exception to this rule occurs when you are given advanced notice that a particular case analysis will be turned in. In such instances, it is expected that your write-up will be typed, and that it will conform to the format guidelines discussed below.

At this time, four of your regular case reports are being scheduled to be collected: (1) the “*Saturn*” case report, due Sept. 29; (2) the “*Adolph Coors*” case report, due on Oct. 15; (3) the “*Sears*” case report, due Nov. 24; and (4) the “*SITEL*” case report, due Dec. 11. Other report submissions may be announced as the semester progresses. Scheduled ‘hand-ins’ will be graded on a 0/1 basis, with points contributing towards your participation/write-up grade. To receive credit, write-ups must (i) tackle and complete the assignment and (ii) follow the format requirements outlined below. Therefore, please make sure that you understand the assignment and to fully execute the task(s) at hand. Feedback for these exercises will be provided immediately after submitting reports, in the form of class discussion. Two implications derive from this: First, no late write-ups can be accepted. Second, students should bring an extra-copy of their hand-in to class and use it to record feedback as the discussion progresses. You will receive a subsequent notice of credit/no-credit for your work, but hand-ins are typically not returned.

Besides required hand-in of regular course assignments, there is an opportunity to submit two additional case write-ups, for extra-credit. Materials subject to this opportunity are extension cases and write-ups are optional. For each case, discussion questions are provided which constitute your assignment [for details, see pages 10 and 14 of the course schedule]. Extra-credit assignments will receive 0, 1, or 2 points, depending on “quality”. The latter refers to the level of understanding of the analytical tool(s) used, the depth and insightfulness of the analysis, and the judiciousness of conclusions and recommendations. Written feedback will be provided on these exercises.

Format. Case reports should be written as if you were a consultant working for management. Several implications follow: First, your reader is busy running the business and won't have the time to read a lengthy document. Therefore, try not to be verbose; provide only information that is directly pertinent to answering the assigned question(s); and think about the most effective way to present your ideas (may be a table?). Second, your reader is very familiar with the firm and its industry. Hence, you should refrain from wasteful repetition of the case's framing and/or unnecessary case facts. Finally, your reader is most interested in the bottom line of your arguments, conclusions, and final advice regarding the issues brought to your attention. Therefore, state your findings and recommendations clearly.

The lion's share of your time should be spent gaining a good understanding of case information and, then, analyzing the issues assigned –i.e., thinking, as opposed to writing. When you finally reach your conclusions, you summarize your analysis and recommendations in a direct, brief, and persuasive manner (e.g., use bullet points!). Your report should be focused, and your writing-style should be succinct and to the point.

Write-ups should be typed, using 1 inch margins and size 12 font. There should be a cover page with the case title and student name on it. After that, assigned discussion questions should be addressed, one at a time, and in the assigned order. Number and repeat each discussion question (as it appears in your syllabus) at the top of a new page, and submit your best arguments after that. Format is important and it affects your grade.

EXAMINATIONS:

There will be two in-class examinations during the semester and a final exam. Test dates (and time for the final) are provided in the course schedule (pages 9 to 17).

COURSE POLICIES

LATE ASSIGNMENTS:

Assignments may be turned in **prior** to the due date for full credit. Late work without prior arrangements due to special circumstances will receive no credit.

MISSED TESTS:

It is your responsibility to be in class at the assigned date and time for each exam (unless arrangements were made in advance for an alternative time –see Test Make-up Policy bellow). In order to adhere to standards of professionalism and academic rigor, as well as out of fairness to students that meet course requirements, there will no make-up tests for missed exams. The only exception to this policy might be under the rare circumstance of a last minute emergency (i.e., accident, sudden illness, etc.) –see “unplanned absences” bellow.

TEST MAKE-UP:

Since tests are scheduled during regular class periods or during the exam week, there should be no time conflicts with other classes. Hence, make-up tests will be arranged only under extenuating circumstances that justify your absence. There are two types of justified exam absences:

- **Planned absences:** If you do have an unavoidable time conflict (e.g., job interview trip, intercollegiate sports team travel), speak to me well in advance of the scheduled test date to make arrangements for an alternate time. There will be no make-up tests provided, due to planned absences, unless arrangements are made with me at least a week in advance of the test date. Also, no makeup test will be permitted more than one week after the regularly scheduled test date.
- **Unplanned absences:** If an unplanned circumstance (i.e., illness or medical emergency) were to occur that makes you unable to attend an exam, you (or someone on your behalf) must get in touch with me as soon as possible, via phone or e-mail (indicating a phone number where you or the contact person can be reached). You will also need to provide a doctor's note or other proper verification of the confining emergency. Make-up tests will be provided only if and when your inability to physically attend the scheduled exam has been established.

OTHER UNIVERSITY and COLLEGE POLICIES

The following University and/or College policies apply to all students in this course:

- A. Students attending the course who do not have the proper prerequisite risk being deregistered from the class.
- B. Students have responsibility to ensure they are properly enrolled in classes. You are advised to review your official class schedule (using Student Tools on FlashLine) during the first two weeks of the semester to ensure you are properly enrolled in this class and section. Should you find an error in your class schedule, you have until Sunday, September 6, 2009 to correct the error. If registration errors are not corrected by this date and you continue to attend and participate in classes for which you are not officially enrolled, you are advised now that you **will not** receive a grade at the conclusion of the semester for any class in which you are not properly registered.
- C. Academic Honesty: Cheating means to misrepresent the source, nature, or other conditions of your academic work (e.g., tests, papers, projects, assignments) so as to get undeserved credit. In addition, it is considered to be cheating when one cooperates with someone else in any such misrepresentation. The use of the intellectual property of others without giving them appropriate credit is a serious academic offense. It is the University's policy that cheating or plagiarism result in receiving a failing grade for the work or course. Repeat offenses result in dismissal from the University.
- D. For Fall 2009, the course withdrawal deadline is Sunday, November 8, 2009. Withdrawal before the deadline results in a "W" on the official transcript; after the deadline a grade must be calculated and reported.
- E. Students with disabilities: University policy 3342-3-01.3 requires that students with disabilities be provided reasonable accommodations to ensure their equal access to course content. If you have a documented disability and require accommodations, please contact the instructor at the beginning of the semester to make arrangements for necessary classroom adjustments. Please note, you must first verify your eligibility for these through Student Accessibility Services (contact 330-672-3391 or visit www.kent.edu/sas <<http://www.registrars.kent.edu/disability/>> for more information on registration procedures).