

Sul Ross State University
Department of Business Administration

Business Strategy

GBA 5301- Web Based
Fall 2020
Section W01
Room: NA

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Course Description:

Development of Business programs and strategies. Understanding of strategy development in uncertain environments. Integration of course content across the MBA curriculum. Recognition of both internal and external variables in formulating business strategies.

Prerequisite: 15 SCH of MBA course work or permission of instructor – *you have my permission!*

Course Material(s):

Thompson, et al; **Crafting & Executing Strategy – Concepts & Readings** – 20th ed.; McGraw-Hill 2016; ISBN: 978-125-929-7779

Student Learning Outcomes:

- SLO1 Analyze & solve complex business problems across major business functions, using advanced business principles and strategies
- SLO 2 Communicate in-depth business information through written, oral and other delivery processes
- SLO 3 Identify and discuss the impact of ethical and social responsibility issues in business

Student Course Objectives:

An advanced understanding of Business Strategy, from both theoretical and practical perspectives

A refined and expanded appreciation of the complex and dynamic nature of the environment of business

An enhanced appreciation for making decisions under uncertainty and or in dynamic market conditions

A refined and enhanced ability to apply strategic thinking to business situations

Advanced understanding of and appreciation for the interdependence among business functions

In sum, an advanced yet practical working knowledge of business strategy as an aid in further study and career pursuits.

Course Grades:

Grades are determined on a percentage/points basis. Course requirements follow:

Engagement/Responsiveness	10%	(100)
Learn-Smart on CONNECT	10%	(100)
Assignments CONNECT & BB	10%	(100)
Discussion Forums - Individual	15%	(150)
Readings – Overviews - Individual	10%	(100)
Mini-Cases 4 @ 50 - Individual	20%	(200)
Chapter Discussion Set - Group	20%	(200)
Peer Evaluation	<u>05%</u>	<u>(050)</u>
TOTAL	100%	(1000)

Grades in the course will be assigned as follows:

A = 90 - 100%	D = 60 - 69%
B = 80 - 89%	F = Below 60
C = 70 - 79%	

Note: It is my expectation that satisfactory work in this course is at the B level or above. Thus, unless you receive notification from me or your grade average reflects lower than this level (80%), you can be assured that you are doing as expected in the course.

Engagement/Responsiveness:

The purpose of this graded course component is solely a function of the fact that this is an online course. As such, it is important that you are “engaged!” That is – that you are active in the course; responsive in submitting work; timely in responding to various requests I may have and so forth. This is intentionally a small percentage but an important component nonetheless. In short, I want to ensure that each of you is “on top” of course components and that the course takes on a high priority in your life for the next few weeks. Remember that it is easy for an online course to get away from you and this is especially true with a summer online course!

Learn-Smart on Connect:

There are actually two Learning Management Systems (LMS) in this course – CONNECT (C) & Black-Board (BB). There are some assets with C which are valuable learning aids. One is **Learn-Smart**. At first glance, some think “big deal,” but after doing the work, it becomes clear that the Learn-Smart approach helps with both focus and time management (two valuable assets in summer school). **We will not cover every chapter but you should note two things.** To receive credit for the particular chapter, it (the assignment) must be completed before the end date. Second, as there will be plenty of time to do the reading, no extensions will be granted excepting very unusual circumstances. By the way, BB does not offer anything close to this type of learning asset which is part of the reason for the use of two LMS. Plus, as there is considerable material to cover, C is an effective way to assist. There are also things associated with BB that help with the online format of the course. Most of the C assignments will be individually based which is another reason it (C) is useful. **C Assignments will not be linked to BB as to grading.** So, the points on C do not really matter as percentages will be computed from C and uploaded to BB.

Assignments - Connect & BB:

There are other assets with CONNECT which also are valuable learning aids. One, which is easily administered and applied is the quiz component based on individual chapter content. Variations on this are some homework modules which are also important. As there is variation as to chapter importance, assignment numbers and emphasis will reflect such variation. Further, such things as article assignments and chapter illustration capsule analyses lend themselves to BB. Thus, both LMS systems are useful tools. Once again, assignments will be announced in advance and as noted above, the assignments must be submitted on time or a late deduction will be applied. The deduction will not be excessive but enough to underscore the importance of meeting deadlines in graduate school. Most, if not all of the assignments will be assigned and due within a relatively short window (time span). The quizzes and/or homework assigned (unless noted otherwise) are intended to be completed on an individual basis and should be completed entirely on such basis. As we get started, do not hesitate to ask if something does not make sense to you or you notice I made a mistake on an assignment date, for example. There are lots of moving pieces to these type courses and I encourage your input.

Discussion Forums:

As this class is conducted on an online basis, it changes several things but leaves many things intact as if it were offered on an in-class basis. One element that does not change is that proper preparation and class involvement are important. Discussion forums are an effective device for keeping high levels of motivation and/interest in the course and thus, are an important component of the course. As there are two sections of this course, forums are enhanced somewhat and we avoid too much repetition of thought or posts to others. In short, class size helps reduce redundancy. Discussion forum topics will be announced on the announcement page but you may not know the topic until close to when the forum begins. One objective with these is to get almost a reaction rather than a carefully and well developed and non-risky response. Some courses seem to be more suited for forums than others. Strategy is such a course that lends itself to discussion forums as there is so much subjectivity in strategy. One last thing - you are urged to contribute at your own initiative and online discussion grades, for example, will be based upon quality of comments more than on quantity. Thus, your *thoughtful contributions* are more compelling than your frequency of input! More detailed expectations will be included with the individual forum(s).

Readings Overviews:

I have several very good articles on various elements of strategy. I think it is good to not only learn the foundation and theory (if you will) of strategy but the practice of it as well. Several readings will provide a more practical perspective on some of the topics we cover. From among the reading assignments I make, you will be expected to write a short overview of some of these assignments (I will make specific assignments on BB). The assignment will be to offer your thoughts about the reading; its relevance to the course; practicality and/or usefulness of the reading on the basis of a position in business, etc. This will be relatively straight forward and will not require a great deal of work (except, of course, for actually reading the article). Further, this will help to ensure that you are fully digesting the content of both the readings on strategy and the strategic concepts. This will be an individual activity and the totality of the article assignments will be the basis for this course graded component. Note - this is 10% of your grade.

Mini Case Assignments:

You will be asked to complete three mini case assignments. The purpose of these is to provide a practical vehicle for tying things together and thinking strategically. This also helps ensure that you appreciate the various linkages

and nuances among all business functions. Finally, these are a primary component in helping us achieve the course objectives.

"Cases" should be typed and single spaced. Length will be dependent on the number of questions assigned to address the issues of the case. However, typical length usually falls somewhere between 1 and 2 pages (excluding exhibits). Any case with more than five (05) mechanical errors (misspellings, typos, etc.) will be lowered by ten points. Cases will be evaluated on thoroughness of analysis of area(s), creativity and practicality revealed in your responses and the quality of organization, writing and clarity.

Remember that cases are written to inform in a professional, succinct and efficient way. Thus, verbosity should be avoided. I would urge you to work in groups of two when working on the case assignments to maximize synergy. However, the case analysis you submit must be independently written. As mentioned previously, you must prepare adequately for the case. I would think at a minimum, this would require an initial reading of the case for general content and then at least two more readings for fine tuning the detail and formulating your assessment of the case.

Chapter Discussion Set:

For many of the chapters, I will assign a few *questions* which will provide an opportunity to link chapter content to a specific situation much as a manager might do. These are very appropriate for a graduate course in strategy. One quick comment - ***when responding to these, make sure you answer the question as you think a working manager would answer rather than what you think I might be after or how I might think about the situation.*** Also, please avoid repeating what the text has to say. At a minimum, try to express things in your own way and without the benefit of what has already been written in the text. Finally, I do like to see practicality and thoughtfulness revealed in your responses but there is no deduction without these elements. We will only have one chapter discussion set but it counts for a large "chunk" of your grade and is team based. Please submit these using the assignment tool in Black-Board. ***Note that your responses should not need to be supplemented with outside material except in a few instances. In short, most of your responses should flow from what you have learned from reading the chapter and the other elements of the class. You will work in groups of two or three and submit these as a group rather than as individual assignments. Please know that is the grade for all individuals in the group so make sure all work is high quality and of graduate caliber. And, please make certain that each group member appreciates what they did not do as well as what they did do for the group. This will be good material for the "comps."***

The question set should be typed and single spaced. Length will be dependent on the number of questions assigned and the depth of your answer. In fact, there is no minimum page limit but I may place a maximum limit!! Any question group with excessive mechanical errors (misspellings, typos, etc.) will be penalized. These will be evaluated on thoroughness of analysis of area(s), creativity and practicality revealed in responses, quality of organization, etc.

Peer Evaluation:

The question set carries a peer component to ensure that each team member contributes as appropriate. The evaluation will be confidential and only seen by the person submitting it and me. However, if one receives a low evaluation, it does not take a rocket scientist to assess the situation.

Final Points

PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS CAREFULLY

This syllabus represents the plan of action for the course. It is, in many ways, a contract between us. Should you lose this document, not understand any part of it, or not agree with some component contained in it, please let me know. Finally, modify the schedule as needed.

Students with Disabilities: *Qualified students with disabilities needing academic or other accommodations to ensure full participation in the programs, services and activities at Sul Ross State University should contact the Office of Student Support Services, Ferguson Hall Room 112, Box C-117, Alpine, Texas 79832 (915) 837-8203.*

Distance Education Statement: *Students enrolled in distance education courses have equal access to the university's academic support services, such as Smarthinking, library resources, such as online databases, and instructional technology support. For more information about accessing these resources, visit the SRSU website. Students should correspond using Sul Ross email accounts and submit online assignments through Blackboard, which requires secure login information to verify students' identities and to protect students' information. As noted below, we will be using both CONNECT (which includes an E-Book) and Black-Board. The procedures for filing a student complaint are included in the student handbook. Students enrolled in distance education courses at Sul Ross are expected to adhere to all policies pertaining to academic honesty and appropriate student conduct, as described in the student handbook. Students in web-based courses must maintain appropriate equipment and software, according to the needs and requirements of the course, as outlined on the SRSU website.*

Other:

My personal position on dishonesty is as follows: if I suspect that there is even a hint or any probability (greater than 0.0), that anyone in the course is violating the policy on academic honesty (plagiarism, copying without appropriate credit, using the work of other students - even with their permission, cheating) I will take the following steps. I will take every means possible to ensure that such individual does not pass the class; and I will apprise the Head of Student Affairs; College Dean; Provost and others in an attempt to have the individual dropped from the MBA program. If this is not clear, let me know and I will be happy to clarify my position. Very simply, this is graduate school and should be approached as such. That is, you get out of graduate school in large part based on what you put into it. That is what I think is the graduate school "mindset." Finally, do not take this personally – this is only to make certain that my position is clear and there is no confusion as to what it is!

This is included for “pace” only! It means close to ZERO as to what and how to do things!
Tentative Course Outline – Make sure and view MASTER SCHEDULE on BB

Tentative Course Outline

<u>Week</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Assignment **</u>
Aug. 24	Introduction & Overview Holiday Monday	
31	Intro. & Process	Ch. 1 - 2
Sept. 07	Continued – Labor Day – Monday	Ch. 1 – 2
14	External and Internal Analysis CA - MC #1	Ch. 3 - 4
21	(cont.) - DF	Ch. 3 - 4
28	(cont.) CA	Ch. 3 - 4
Oct. 05	Competitive Advantage MC #2	Ch. 5
12	Business Strategy – CA	Ch. 6 - 7
19		
26	Business Strategy (cont.)	Ch. 6 – 7
Nov. 02	Corporate Strategy - MC #3	Ch. 8 - 9
09*	(cont.) – DF CA	Ch. 8 - 9
16	Other Topics	Ch. 10 - 12
23	Other Topics – MC #4 CA Thanksgiving Holidays 25-27	Ch. 10 – 12
30	Other - Discussion – CDQ #1 Due	Ch. 10 – 12
Dec. 07	TBD	

* November 13th - Last day to withdraw or drop with a "W"

** Assignment due last class day of the week unless notified to the contrary

DF = Discussion Forum; CA = CONNECT Assignment; MC = Mini Case

* Each of the dates is a Monday – this just shows what is likely to be due for the entire week

Other:

Please turn in assignments on time

Do NOT email assignments and/or Do NOT use the BB drop box or other like devices

You may write your assignments directly in the assignment submission area or include a word document or both (both is what I prefer)

Please do NOT submit documents in formats other than word.doc or excel... (if needed)

*When submitting group work, only one person per group needs to submit. **But all group members must be identified so everyone receives credit.***

You will note that we will NOT cover every chapter – only those I feel are the most critical to a solid foundation in strategy. But, I sure hope you read everything!