MGMT9033
Seminar in Strategic Management

Meeting time: Wednesdays, 1–4 pm
Meeting room: 502 Lindner Hall (conf. room)
Office hours: Wednesdays, 10am–noon

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Course description and objectives:

The literature in strategic management attempts to explain the differences in the performance and survival of firms by analyzing the effects of a variety of factors at multiple levels, including countries, industries, networks, firms, teams, and individuals. This is a survey course intended to introduce students to the seminal as well as recent works and dominant research streams in the strategic management field. Over the course of the semester, we will cover a variety of topics that represent central issues in strategy formulation, selection and implementation. Since our time is limited and the field of strategy is vast, the expectation is that participants will continue through independent self-study to gain a greater depth of understanding of the topics we discuss as well as pursue other related subjects not covered during the term. The intent of this seminar is to provide a basic foundation for conducting and publishing original research in strategic management.

Procedures and policies:

Each topic of the course will be covered by discussing several empirical and/or theoretical papers. You will be expected to read all assigned papers prior to the class. You should actively participate in the discussions by communicating your insights, posing interesting questions, and where appropriate, critiquing the theoretical and/or empirical aspects of the study. In addition, you will be responsible for facilitating class discussions on a rotating basis. This responsibility entails generating summaries and discussion questions, and facilitating the discussion during the designated class sessions, as explained in more detail below.

All readings will be accessible to you via our course portal on Blackboard and/or library databases.

Grading:

Grades in this class will be based on the following components:

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<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Participation/Summaries/Discussion leader</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research proposals (2 @ 20% each)</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<td>Comprehensive final exam</td>
<td>30%</td>
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Participation/Summaries/Discussion leader

Each week we will consider a different aspect of strategic management and read 6-8 articles that relate to it. The articles are meant to familiarize you with the some of the seminal works in strategic management as well as some recent extensions of thought in the area. It is important for you to know the content of these articles. However, you should not be passive consumers of others’ research. Understand what each article is trying to say and why, but also act as judge and jury. In other words, your discussions should go beyond the simple repetition and cataloging of others ideas. Your own insights and interpretations must be shared in the class. Also, make sure that you can explain how the papers relate to and/or differ from others that you have read. Your grade on your class discussions will depend on your ability to participate in the manner indicated above.

Each week I will assign a set of the papers from the class’ assigned reading to the students. For each of the papers assigned to you, you will have to turn in a short (one-page) summary of the paper (you will email them as a set to the instructor and other students at least 12 hours before class time). The summary should address the following issues: a) what is the research question (or theory) and what is its significance? b) What are the main arguments of the paper? c) What kind of methodology is used (if any)? d) What are the key findings of the paper? e) Your general review comments on the paper (the appropriateness of the theory and method, and any other strengths or weaknesses that you perceived in the manuscript, etc.) and 2-3 questions for discussion. Summaries are due each week 12 hours before the start of class.

Depending on final class size, you will be assigned to lead discussions on two to four topics throughout the semester. Discussion facilitation requires you to integrate all the assigned readings that particular week in a brief summary and prepare a set of discussion questions, which are to be emailed directly as a single one-page document to all class participants (including the instructor) at least 12 hours prior to the start of that class session. In addition, facilitators will guide the discussion for their assigned readings, including regulating the flow of discussion and seeking input from all participants.

Research proposals

You must submit two (2) short (3-5 pages, single-spaced, exclusive of references) research proposals—one due during the first portion of the class (due on or before October 26) and the other corresponding to topics from the second portion of the class (due on or before December 7). Each proposal should build off of the topic and readings assigned for a particular week during that period.

The proposals are intended to help you identify important research questions that require study, as well as a potential way of studying these questions. After reading the assigned papers for your chosen week (topic), craft the front end of a paper – one that describes a “gap” in the literature and follows with a proposal to address that missing link or inconsistencies in the literature. Thus, your paper must acknowledge, build on and add to the knowledge conveyed in the day’s readings. You are also free to incorporate materials from the other days’ topics in the strategy seminar, as well as read and reference other papers related to your chosen topic (based on your own independent research).
You should follow the *Academy of Management Journal* style-guide when formatting your proposal.

Your proposal should include the following elements:

- a two–four paragraph introduction, which highlights an important research question within the topic area and explains why it is important/worth pursuing;
- key constructs and their definitions (may be part of a brief literature review);
- brief arguments and propositions (hypotheses), and a corresponding model if appropriate (complete with “boxes and arrows”)
- summary of your intended methodology (e.g., sample, measurement, method of analysis, etc.);
- list of references

**Final exam**

The final exam will be administered during finals week, and will simulate (to the extent possible) an in-class comps-style exam (4-hour time limit, open notes). In general, exam questions will require application, analysis, synthesis, and integration of the materials covered during the semester. The exam may be graded by other Strategy faculty (in addition to the instructor).

**Late assignments:**

All work is due on the date specified. Late work will not be accepted.

**Topic schedule:**

- Week 1 – Introduction; Domain of Strategy
- Week 2 – Theory and Theorizing
- Week 3 – Environment, Strategy, and Performance (incl. I/O Economics)
- Week 4 – Resource-Based View of the Firm, Dynamic Capabilities, and Learning
- Week 5 – Strategic Human Capital
- Week 6 – Business-level Strategy and Competitive Dynamics
- Week 7 – Corporate-level Strategy: M&As and Diversification
- Week 8 – Global Strategy: International Strategy/Diversification
- Week 9 – TCE & Cooperative Strategies: Strategic Alliances, Joint Ventures, and Networks
- Week 10 – Upper Echelons Theory and Strategic Leadership
- Week 11 – Agency Theory and Corporate Governance
- Week 12 – Stakeholder Theory, Political Strategies, and Corporate Social Responsibility/Performance
- Week 14 – Thanksgiving Holiday - NO CLASS
- Week 15 – Contingency Theory and Configurations