
**BUSINESS STRATEGY II
BUSINESS 9771 – Fall 2017**

Professor JP Vergne
Office No. 2337
Tel. Number 519-661-3598
jvergne@ivey.ca

Faculty Assistant: Maria Galindo
mgalindo@ivey.ca

Full schedule and reading list available in the accompanying spreadsheet

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course introduces the field of business strategy and a sample of the underlying theories from sociology and psychology that may be used to engage in strategy research. We will frame the discussion this semester around the big questions in strategy. This will provide the basis for engaging in discussion of issues at different levels of analysis—a common theme in strategy research that often leads to debate about which perspective may be “more” important. The variation in explanations will provide a platform for lively discussion and debate in class, and the development of research. Each class session will also feature a “Research In Practice” (RIP) workshop aimed at: 1/ developing some of the crucial soft skills needed to become a successful scholar (e.g. how to frame a compelling story around your research paper); and 2/ becoming familiar with some of the tacit social norms that shape academic research (e.g., what else do researchers do when they’re not writing papers?). Importantly, this course will complement Organizational Theory and Business Strategy I. **The full schedule, the reading list, and the student assignments are available in the accompanying spreadsheet.**

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The aim of the course will be to examine a number of perspectives, consider the strengths and weaknesses of each, and to develop a sense of the comparative and complementary nature of these models to explain business strategy. You will develop two skills in this course: 1) the ability to engage in theoretical and methodological discussion at different levels of analysis and 2) the ability to identify boundary conditions and opportunities to develop and extend theory in business strategy.

By the conclusion of this course, each student should

1. have a solid understanding of the main concepts and development at the intersection of strategy and sociology/psychology;
2. be able to integrate and extend lines of thinking in discussing relevant topics;
3. be able to apply theories and perspectives from sociology and psychology to important strategy issues;
4. have developed, during the RIP workshops, a good understanding of some of the tacit social norms that shape academic research, and some of the crucial soft skills needed to become a successful scholar; and

5. be able to develop a well-designed and well-written term paper that is submittable to AOM, AIB, and/or SMS conferences, and is potentially publishable.

METHODS OF EVALUATION

Evaluation will be on the basis of the following weights:

Class discussions	40%
Contribution to RIP Workshops	15%
Term paper presentation (last session)	5%
Term paper (due November 15 at 2.00pm)	40%

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Class Discussions (40%)

We will be spending most of our time discussing the three assigned papers in class. It is critical that each student comes to class prepared to contribute to the discussion. Preparation does not mean “reading the articles before class”—it means reading them at least once, thinking deeply about them (e.g. assumptions, theoretical claims, research design, methods, findings, contribution, future areas of research), comparing and contrasting them. I expect students to have taken extensive notes about the assigned readings prior to each class and be ready to engage constructively.

These are the base assessments I will be using to evaluate each session:

1. Does the student demonstrate a good understanding of the assigned reading materials?
2. Can the student identify the common themes in the readings and use these themes to integrate and compare the articles?
3. Can the student formulate appropriate critiques of the readings and defend his/her position in discussion with other class members?

In addition to the above, if you are one of the two **Lead Discussants** for a given paper, you should be able to:

1. Take the lead on discussing the paper’s ideas and answer questions that other students might have about them
2. Relate the paper to other papers covered in earlier sessions
3. Assess the paper’s contribution in non-trivial ways
4. Come up with one interesting and researchable question derived from this paper

Contribution to RIP workshops (15%)

Some RIP workshops require preparation, some don't. In any event, all RIP workshops will require student engagement, and this is how I will evaluate your contribution most of the time. RIP workshops represent a unique opportunity for you to get answers to the "I was afraid to ask" kind of questions. Asking the right questions can thus be very valuable for the rest of the group! When a RIP workshop requires student prep, I will evaluate your prep work independently based on your input during the discussions. RIP workshops will last 30-60 minutes depending on the topic.

Term Paper Presentation (5%)

In the last class (Sept 8), each student will present their paper idea to the class. The quality of the presentation will be based on the following criteria:

1. Attractiveness and preparedness of the talk,
2. Is the idea compelling?
3. Clarity of the speech,
4. Handling of the questions,
5. Management of the allowed time.

Inevitably, paper topics tend to change (hopefully to more narrow topics) by the end of the term. The push to deliver a topic on Sept 8 is to get the process of paper writing started. This also provides an open forum for paper development. The papers are due on Nov 15 (see below).

Term Paper due November 15 at 2.00pm (40%)

You are required to submit a term paper. The paper must be centered on a topic in strategy related to what we have covered in the course, and may be:

Option #1: A substantial extension of an empirical paper used to satisfy the requirements of another course. The paper should be 35-45 pages, double spaced, font 12, including everything. I will have higher expectations if you choose this option (given that you had more time to work on your paper). Your submitted paper should be nearing readiness for submission at a good or very good journal (e.g. Journal of Management Studies, Strategic Management Journal). Only papers related to this course's content will be deemed acceptable.

Option #2: A new paper that was not developed before you took this course to satisfy the requirements of another course. The paper should be 25-35 pages, double-spaced, font 12, including everything. This paper can be theoretical or empirical, but must have the potential to be further developed for submission to a leading conference.

A theoretical paper should follow the style of *Academy of Management Review*. The grading of the paper will be based on the following criteria, with more weight on the significance and coherence of the theoretical framework:

- Importance of the topic to the management field
- Relevance and thoroughness of the literature review
- Innovativeness and significance of the theoretical framework

- Logical development of the hypotheses
- Implications of the paper
- Consistency and clarity of the writing
- Professionalism of manuscript preparations

An empirical paper should follow the style of *Academy of Management Journal* or *Strategic Management Journal*. The grading of the paper will be based on the following criteria, with more weight on the coherence between the theoretical framework and the research method.

- Importance of the topic to the management field
- Relevance and thoroughness of the literature review
- Development of the conceptual framework (including hypotheses)
- Soundness and feasibility in research design (including data sources, measures, and analytical techniques)
- Thoughtfulness in results interpretations (for generated or expected results)
- Insights in discussions (unexpected findings, boundary conditions, future directions, etc.)
- Consistency and clarity of the writing

I will accept a paper that does NOT include the data and results sections. Papers without data will have more grading emphasis on the feasibility of the research design. These papers will need to describe data. Feasibility will relate to whether the data's accessibility and fit with your research question and design.

PLAGIARISM / ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism-detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

As part of a successful graduate student experience at Western, we encourage students to make their health and wellness a priority. Western provides several on campus health-related services to help you achieve optimum health and engage in healthy living while pursuing your graduate degree. For example, to support physical activity, all students, as part of their registration, receive membership in Western's Campus Recreation Centre. Numerous cultural events are offered throughout the year. Please check out the Faculty of Music web page <http://www.music.uwo.ca>, and our own McIntosh Gallery <http://www.mcintoshgallery.ca>. Information regarding health- and wellness-related services available to students may be found at <http://www.health.uwo.ca>.

Students seeking help regarding mental health concerns are advised to speak to someone they feel comfortable confiding in, such as their faculty supervisor, their program director (graduate chair), or other relevant administrators in their unit. Campus mental health resources may be found at http://www.health.uwo.ca/mental_health/resources.html.

To help you learn more about mental health, Western has developed an interactive mental health learning module, found here: http://www.health.uwo.ca/mental_health/module.html. This module is 30 minutes in length and provides participants with a basic understanding of mental health issues and of available campus and community resources. Topics include stress, anxiety, depression, suicide and eating disorders. After successful completion of the module, participants receive a certificate confirming their participation.

DETAILED SESSION SCHEDULE

The full schedule, the reading list, and the student assignments are available in the accompanying spreadsheet.