Business Strategy I
Business 9770a. Winter 2022-23

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Wednesdays 1.00p.m. – 4.00p.m., Room 2120

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES
This doctoral seminar surveys core theoretical perspectives and empirical findings in the field of strategic management research. Strategic management addresses the overarching themes of firm behaviour and performance, seeking to explain why some firms systematically outperform others, and the competitive strategies that drive success in the marketplace. The strategy field is vast, so, by necessity, the seminar is an introduction to the major topics of the field, covering one topic per session. The seminar's objectives are as follows:

1. By the end of the course, students should have developed a critical understanding of a) the dominant research questions in the strategy literature, b) the major theoretical lenses and arguments used to make causal predictions, c) empirical designs and methods for assessing causality, d) contributions and limitations of existing research, and e) opportunities for extending and refining current studies.
2. Students should be able to critically assess published academic papers and provide constructive evaluations.
3. Students should be able to communicate their views and ideas on the topics of enquiry both in writing and orally.
4. Students should develop new ideas and research studies that advance the strategic management field.

EXPECTATIONS
Since the course is a discussion-based seminar, each student is required to carefully read all the assigned weekly readings (indicated by an asterisk) and to actively participate in class discussions. Students should come to class prepared with their ideas, perspectives and questions about the papers. As a start, students should think about:

- The paper's assumptions about firms, markets, individuals, and the plausibility of the assumptions
- The causal arguments and logic underpinning the paper's predictions, and how persuasive they are
- Contexts and questions for which the paper is particularly relevant
- How the paper connects theoretically with other papers in the session and in prior sessions.
Optional readings are provided for further reference if students wish to delve deeper into a particular topic. Students must attend each weekly session and complete all required assignments.

**COURSE EVALUATION**

Student performance in the course is evaluated based on three components:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contribution to class discussions</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly presentations/written synopses</td>
<td>45%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Term paper</td>
<td>30%</td>
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**Weekly presentations:** Every week, each of the core readings will be assigned to a student who will critically read and present the paper to the class as if it were their own work. The presentation will take the form of a 30-minute seminar, including time for class discussion. Students should prepare a complete slide deck in Powerpoint for their presentation. The slides should follow a traditional seminar presentation format, with introduction, motivation, hypothesis development, data description, models, results, conclusions and contribution sections. Presentations will be graded and must be emailed to me by midnight the day before class each week.

**Weekly written synopses:** students who do not have an assigned paper to present will instead write a 1-2 page (single-spaced) synopsis and critique of one of the assigned readings each week. Synopses will be graded and must be emailed to me before midnight the day before class each week. They should include the following:

(a) The research question or problem the paper addresses

(b) Summary of theoretical predictions, empirical methods, and main findings

(c) Strengths and limitations

(d) Contribution to the field, and relationship to other papers discussed in the same or earlier sessions

(e) One idea for a research question or study that would extend the paper

**Term paper:** Each student will also write a term paper on a strategy topic related to the course. There are two papers options. The first option is to write an original research paper, theoretical or empirical in nature, that makes a novel contribution to the strategy literature. If data collection cannot be performed in time, the paper should clearly identify the motivation and research question, explain the logic of underlying arguments, lay out the propositions, identify the type of data needed to test them, and indicate where/how such data would be collected. Particular attention should be placed on research design and empirical identification. The second option is to write a comprehensive, critical literature review of a topic within strategic management. Students will present their paper ideas to the class in the final session of the course. Papers should be no more than 20 pages (double-spaced, excluding exhibits and references) and should be submitted by 21st April.

**ATTENDANCE**

Attendance in all sessions of the course is mandatory. A contribution grade of zero will be assigned to missed classes (notification requirements must be met – see below). If a student’s absenteeism reaches 25 percent (3 or more classes), s/he will not be eligible to hand in the final term paper, and will fail the course. http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/exam/attendance.pdf. If a student must miss a class for health reasons or religious holidays, s/he must send the instructor an email in advance with the reason for absence.
ENROLLMENT RESTRICTIONS
Enrollment in this course is restricted to graduate students in the Ivey PhD Program, as well as any student that has obtained special permission to enroll in this course from the course instructor as well as the Graduate Chair (or equivalent) from the student's home program.

ACADEMIC OFFENCES: PLAGIARISM AND 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 https://grad.uwo.ca/administration/regulations/13.html

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).

SUPPORT SERVICES: HEALTH AND WELLNESS
Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Health and Wellness at Western University https://www.uwo.ca/health/psych/index.html for a complete list of options about how to obtain help. Additionally, 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), program coordinator or other relevant administrators in their unit.

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. See https://www.uwo.ca/health.

ACCESSIBLE EDUCATION WESTERN (AEW)
Western is committed to achieving barrier-free accessibility for all its members, including graduate students. As part of this commitment, Western provides a variety of services devoted to promoting, advocating, and accommodating persons with disabilities in their respective graduate program.

Graduate students with disabilities are strongly encouraged to register with Accessible Education Western (AEW), a confidential service designed to support graduate and undergraduate students through their academic program. With the appropriate documentation, the student will work with both AEW and their graduate programs (normally their Graduate Chair and/or Course instructor) to ensure that appropriate academic accommodations to program requirements are arranged. These accommodations include individual counselling, alternative formatted literature, accessible campus transportation, learning strategy instruction, writing exams and assistive technology instruction.

A FINAL WELCOME AND REQUEST OF STUDENTS
I welcome individuals of all ages, backgrounds, beliefs, ethnicities, genders, gender identities, gender expressions, national origins, religious affiliations, sexual orientations, ability, and other visible and nonvisible differences. I consider this classroom to be a place where you will be treated with respect. All members of this class are expected to contribute to a respectful, welcoming and inclusive environment for every other member of the class. If it is appropriate to our learning and you feel comfortable doing so, I ask that you share your unique point of view as we explore the course content.
SESSION 1: INTRODUCTION AND CONCEPTS
January 11


SESSION 2: INDUSTRY ANALYSIS AND MARKET STRUCTURE
January 18

*Porter, M.E. 1985. Competitive Advantage, Chapter 1


**SESSION 3: INDUSTRY DYNAMICS**
**January 25**


**SESSION 4: THE RESOURCE BASED VIEW OF THE FIRM**
**February 1**


**SESSION 5: DYNAMIC CAPABILITIES**
**February 8**


**SESSION 6: TRANSACTION COST ECONOMICS I**  
**February 15**


SESSION 7: TRANSACTION COST ECONOMICS II
March 1


SESSION 8: EVOLUTIONARY/LEARNING PERSPECTIVE
March 8


**SESSION 9: AGENCY THEORY AND CORPORATE GOVERNANCE**  
**March 22**


**SESSION 10: CORPORATE DIVERSIFICATION AND SCOPE**  
**March 29**


**SESSION 11: RECENT COOL STUFF FROM TOP STRATEGY/MANAGEMENT JOURNALS**  
April 5

**SESSION 12: STUDENT PRESENTATIONS**  
April 12