

COURSE OUTLINE

BSP3001 Strategic Management

Semester 1, 2016-2017

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Course Description

Strategy is a fundamental aspect of management yet few people are able to think strategically. This course will help students become excellent Asian strategists. The course is designed as a journey that covers all essential aspects of strategic management: strategy analysis (internal and external), formulation of strategies at different levels of the organization, and strategy implementation. We will also reflect on the strategic purpose of organizations, and their role towards shareholders, stakeholders and society. The intention is to provide students with strategy insights; reflect on strategic dilemmas; and practice strategy tools to enable students to become confident and creative strategic thinkers.

Course Objectives

The most interesting questions are those for which there is no immediate or obvious answer, and the field of strategy deals with exactly this type of question. It is therefore not surprising that strategists have come up with many contradictory paradigms. Frameworks that fit one firm may be useless for another. In this course, the emphasis is not just on acquiring knowledge and applying frameworks. Students will be expected to exhibit traits of excellent strategists, including going beyond the tools offered, questioning received wisdom, extending and adapting the frameworks, and exhibiting unconventional thinking. The course will be problem-focused and managerially relevant. These are objectives set for this course:

- *In-depth strategy knowledge.* To encourage the understanding of the many, often conflicting, schools of thought and to facilitate the gaining of insight into the assumptions, possibilities and limitations of each set of theories and tools;
- *Strategic thinking ability.* To develop the student's ability to think strategically, understand the language of business, analyze and craft strategies on paper and verbally in class discussion, critically reflect on existing theories and tools, to creatively combine or generate frameworks and tools and use them where applicable;
- *Asia – focus.* To provide insights into and reflect upon strategies of Asian companies, in line with our School's mission to lead from Asia, and in line with the aim that our students become outstanding Asian strategists.

Pedagogy and Course Format

Learning is so much more than understanding and reproducing. To make the journey to become an excellent Asian strategist rewarding I follow a multi-stage approach to learning: 1.) remembering and understanding of concepts and frameworks; 2.) application of theory in practice; 3.) using lessons from application and practice to analyze, evaluate and reflect

on theory and frameworks; 4.) generate original ideas and concepts and move beyond current frameworks. As such, I roughly follow Bloom's taxonomy of learning (Figure 1), and aim at achieving higher-order thinking levels, in line with the NUS standards for level 3000 courses.



Figure 1: Bloom's taxonomy of learning

To achieve this I apply a mix of pedagogical tools. Readings, videos and cases first need to be prepared before coming to class. Classes will not be used to review readings, but rather to give examples, apply concepts to analyze actual situations or cases, and for guest speakers. Some classes will be in the form of e-learning. Students will be able to go beyond existing frameworks in collaborative learning assignments and class discussions, and in dialogue sessions with speakers.

- *Course material:* Students should come prepared by reading or watching required materials in advance.
- *Classes:* Active participation is a condition for the success of the course.
- *Case discussion:* I apply a 3-stage approach to learning with cases: 1. students thoroughly prepare the case at home; 2. in class students discuss their analysis in a small group; 3. there is a plenary discussion in class. This will allow students to compare and share ideas and learn from each other. Learning comes not only from understanding new concepts and applying analytical skills. Debating with others will sharpen one's analytical skills and help communicate one's ideas clearly.
- *Guest speakers:* Considerable preparation time has gone into inviting several high-level executives in class. These guest speakers are typically highly appreciated as they give insights into real-life strategy issues in companies. However, given their busy schedules, last-minute changes are possible. Your understanding and flexibility is appreciated! Advance preparation by studying the company and asking questions will help to create a vibrant learning environment.
- *Feedback:* Regular feedback will be provided, as it is an important element of the learning process. Feel free during the semester to e-mail me or approach me if you have any questions on the topics discussed in class, your individual performance, or if you would like to give feedback on the course.

General Standards

- During class smartphones and other gadgets should be off and movement minimal.
- Please behave professionally, in particular when guest speakers are invited (punctual, prepared, appropriate dress).
- All course assignments will be automatically checked for plagiarism.
- All materials are available on IVLE, and all submissions should be through IVLE.

Course Overview

The scheme below summarizes the course structure and the different topics covered. For easier navigation online, a detailed schedule with topics, cases and readings per session, including direct links to all learning materials is available in IVLE.



Grading and Assignments

The final grade for this course will be computed based on the following:

Class participation	30%
Take-home mid-term group assignment	10%
Group project & presentation	30%
Final in-class test (case analysis)	30%

- *Class participation.* Grades will be based on the quality and quantity of participation, but the focus will be on quality. Quality of participation is not just the individual student's contribution, but how much that student advances collective learning. As such, a constructive and participative attitude is required. Absence from class sessions or seldom speaking up during class discussions will result in a low participation score. Please try to participate regularly in class and at the IVLE forum.
- *Take-home mid-term group assignment:* this assignment requires application of ideas or models covered in class, and the ability to go beyond these when applying them.

- *Group project.* Real life problems are never neatly presented in the form of a case. Strategy problems are messy and the way you research them is important in solving these “messes”. The group project provides an opportunity to research a company or organization, apply your consultancy skills, and make a strategic plan for the CEO.
- *Final test.* The final test will consist of a case with a small number of questions. The test is open book, preferably done on your laptop and uploaded on IVLE. It requires deep understanding of strategy and extensive practice in the application of theory to a business situation. The best preparation is active class participation.

Literature

This course strives to be “paper-less” where possible. Readings and cases have been placed in IVLE. There is no need to purchase a textbook. Below is a list of books we will draw from during this course:

- De Wit, Bob, and Ron Meyer (2010), *Strategy - Process, Content, Context: An International Perspective*, fourth edition, London: Thomson Learning.
- Barney, J.B. and Hesterly, W.S. (2010) *Strategic Management and Competitive Advantage*, third edition. Prentice Hall.
- Lynch, R. (2015) *Strategic Management*, Pearson, 7th edition.
- Marcus, A.A. (2011). *Management Strategy*, McGraw Hill, second edition.
- Wheelen, T.L., Hunger, J.D., Hoffman, A.N. & Bamford, C.E. (2015), *Concepts in Strategic Management and Business Policy*. Pearson, 14th edition

Academic honesty and plagiarism

Academic integrity and honesty is essential for the pursuit and acquisition of knowledge. The University and School expect every student to uphold academic integrity & honesty at all times. Academic dishonesty is any misrepresentation with the intent to deceive, or failure to acknowledge the source, or falsification of information, or inaccuracy of statements, or cheating at examinations/tests, or inappropriate use of resources. Plagiarism is ‘the practice of taking someone else’s work or ideas and passing them off as one’s own’ (The New Oxford Dictionary of English). The University and School will not condone plagiarism. Students should adopt this rule - You have the obligation to make clear to the assessor which is your own work, and which is the work of others. Otherwise, your assessor is entitled to assume that everything being presented for assessment is being presented as entirely your own work. This is a minimum standard. In case of any doubts, you should consult your instructor.

Additional guidance is available at:

<http://www.nus.edu.sg/registrar/adminpolicy/acceptance.html#NUSCodeofStudentConduct>

Online Module on Plagiarism:

<http://emodule.nus.edu.sg/ac/>