



# THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

## McCOMBS SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

### MANAGEMENT 374

#### GENERAL MANAGEMENT AND STRATEGY

Spring 2012

#### Contact Information:

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**Class Meeting:** 04345 M/W 2:00 - 3:30 UTC 1.118  
**TA:** To be announced

#### COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Why do some firms perform better than others? General managers grapple with this question as they attempt to enhance the performance of the firms they manage. In this course we will explore possible answers to this question, examine a variety of analytical models that help us identify critical issues that affect the performance of firms, and build on our understanding of complex business situations to devise realistic solutions that address those issues. This course is designed to enable students to analyze business situations from the point of view of the practicing general manager. General managers are responsible for making strategic decisions that insure the long-term success of the entire firm or a major division. Their key tasks involve identifying opportunities and threats in the corporate environment, the procurement and allocation of critical resources, the integration of activities across subparts of the organization, and the determination of business unit strategy, corporate strategy and direction.

To be effective, general managers need to have an in-depth understanding of the generic problems in relevant functional areas such as marketing, finance, R&D, and production. Therefore, in this course, we will integrate the knowledge and skills developed in earlier courses. However, this does not mean that general managers can only be “generalists” who know a little bit of everything, but not very much of any one thing. General managers need more than functional knowledge, they must also be able to deal with problems and issues confronting the corporation as a whole, including relationships between the corporation and its external environment as well as among the different internal units. Therefore, students are expected to combine knowledge from other courses with the new perspectives presented in this course in order to analyze and resolve actual business problems.

The course is intended for students who envision themselves occupying managerial and executive positions in the future. Such positions are not limited to general management but rather include a variety of non-executive positions that entail managerial decisions and actions that have strategic implications. In addition, students who see themselves as consultants and entrepreneurs will also need these skills to be successful.

Communication is a critical managerial skill. Therefore, your active participation in class discussions is essential to your performance in this class. Moreover, lecturing will be limited in this class and I expect you to have read the assigned reading prior to class. Perhaps more than any other subject, strategic management is best learned by analyzing real cases and completing real projects: placing yourself in the shoes of a general manager who has to solve real strategic problems. Therefore, the emphasis in this class is on active learning, not passive learning.

**This course carries the Writing Flag.** Writing Flag courses are designed to give students experience with writing in an academic discipline. In this class, you can expect to write regularly during the semester, complete substantial writing projects, and receive feedback from your instructor to help you improve your writing. You will also have the opportunity to revise one or more assignments, and to read and discuss your peers' work. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from your written work.

#### **COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

1. Develop the ability to view the firm from the perspective of general managers. Achieving this goal presupposes synthesis of knowledge acquired in previous courses and understanding which part of that knowledge is relevant to general managers.
2. Understand the key factors that explain why some firms persistently outperform other firms.
3. Understand the fundamental concepts in strategic management and build on those concepts to identify how firms can create value, appropriate value and sustain value creation in an industry.
4. To understand and apply the basic tools and concepts of strategic planning as they apply to a business and its various stakeholders
5. To learn how to identify the key issues and drivers that determines a company's focus and strategy, stressing the emergence of a global economy.
6. Integrate and reinforce previous course work, combining an emphasis on independent research and the framework of strategic management provided by the text.
7. Learn to distinguish between basic causes of business problems and attendant symptoms.
8. Practice the formulation of realistic strategic recommendations and implementation plans that balance the tradeoffs inherent in any strategic situation.
9. Enhance analytical thinking and the ability to report conclusions effectively in both written and oral form.
10. Learn how to gather and analyze information on a specific firm and the respective industry.
11. Strengthen and refine business writing and presentation skills by simulating a real world business environment.
12. Discuss some of the practical realities of running different types of businesses.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND THEIR WEIGHTS IN COURSE GRADE:

1. Class participation	150 points
2. Written case analyses	150 points
3. Case presentation	50 points
4. Group Project	350 points
4.1 Project contributions (peer evaluation) (50)	
4.2 Presentation (50)	
4.3 Written report (250)	
5. Exam 1	150 points
6. Exam 2	150 points
Total	1,000 points

Letter Grade	Low Range	High Range
A	930	1000
A-	900	929
B+	867	899
B	834	866
B-	800	833
C+	767	799
C	734	766
C-	700	733
D+	667	699
D	634	666
D-	600	633
F	0	599

## REQUIRED READING:

The first 2 items can be purchased at the bookstore.

1. Wheelen, T.L. & Hunger, J.D. (2010). *Concepts in Strategic Management and Business Policy, 12th ed.* Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall. ISBN 0-13-609735-9 (from Coop).
2. Subarctic Survival Situation – from Human Synergistics (from Coop)
3. AES Corporation – Rewriting the Rules of Management. (Available for free on Blackboard)
4. Harvard Business School Cases (purchase McCombs Copy Center)

## CLASS PARTICIPATION:

Attendance Policy: As the course is highly integrated and 15% of your grade is class participation, it would be very difficult to earn a high grade without consistent attendance. *If you have to miss one class, I don't need to know about it, I assume you have a good excuse.*

Class participation is important and critical in this class. Active class participation will be one measure of your ability to make and communicate sound decisions. Unexcused absences will negatively affect your grade. Your on-going preparation for, participation in, and contribution to the various discussions and activities of the class will be assessed. In addition, attendance, quantity, and quality of contribution count. In short, my expectation is simple--You are expected to "come to every class prepared." More specifically, what does it mean to "come to class prepared?" Coming to class prepared means that:

1. You will have read the material and have completed all of the assigned cases, exercises and readings;
2. You will be able to articulate the central thesis and the arguments that supported it (them);
3. You will have already mentally critiqued each reading;
4. Be able to see how readings relate to and combine with each other.
5. You will be able to provide your answers (and support for those answers) to the questions discussed in class.
6. You will place your name tag in front of you for each class

In short, I expect that you will come to class prepared and ready to **actively participate**.

Regarding in-class discussions, some of the characteristics of effective class participation are as follows:

1. Do your comments show evidence of a thorough reading and analysis of the materials?
2. Are your points relevant to the discussion in terms of increasing everyone's understanding, or are they merely a regurgitation of the readings?
3. Do your comments take into consideration the ideas offered by others earlier in the class, or are the points isolated and disjointed? (The best class contributions following the lead-off tend to be those which reflect not only excellent preparation, but also good listening, and interpretative and integrative skills as well.)
4. Do you show a willingness to test new ideas or are all comments cautious and "safe"?
5. Do you interact with class members by asking questions or challenging conclusions?

Clearly, you must participate if you are going to share your ideas with others; but excellent participation does not mean simply contributing in every class. The best contributors in past classes have been those whose contributions were both insightful and persuasive. The issue is one of quality, not simply quantity. If I call on you and you do not want to answer, you are allowed to simply "pass" on the opportunity to respond. Passing once or twice is acceptable however passing regularly is not advised.

Grades for participation will be based (loosely) according to the following criteria:

**Excellent Participation (A-Level)**

- Contribute actively in all class discussions, exercises and activities.
- Share insights of relevant information from reading and from personal experience
- Make succinct comments to move discussion forward rather than repeat what others have said
- Clarify points that others may not understand
- Demonstrate excellent ability to apply, analyze, and synthesize course material
- Demonstrate willingness to take risks by answering challenging questions or offering important insights from personal experience
- Never miss class (except for an unavoidable emergency)

**Good Participation (B-level):**

- Participate enthusiastically in all class exercises and activities.
- Participate regularly and voluntarily in class discussions
- Contribute relevant and important points to topics of discussion
- Analyze, apply, and synthesize course material
- Almost never miss class

**Fair Participation (C-level):**

- Participate in class discussion only when called upon
- Contribute relevant and important points to topics of discussion
- Attend class regularly, but miss more classes than others in the course

**Poor Participation: any of the following (D-level):**

- Reluctantly participate in discussion, exercises and activities
- Make comments that are irrelevant, inaccurate or not helpful
- Miss class often

**Unacceptable Participation: any of the following will result in failing participation grade**

- Fail to contribute in class, even when called upon
- Fail to participate in class exercises and activities
- Make comments that are inappropriate or offensive to others
- Behave in a manner that is distracting or disruptive to the class
- Miss class regularly

I realize that each person has a unique personality and that not everyone is comfortable actively participating in class. My role is to provide you an incentive to go beyond your comfort zone. I will know the individuals who push themselves beyond their personal standards. I will observe each of you over the course of the semester and make a judgment. In addition, I will provide you an opportunity to give me your perspective regarding your class participation. If you are not confident that your participation has been as strong as you like, it is suggested that you stop by during office hours so that we can discuss your participation and how it can be improved.

### **MAKE-UP EXAMINATIONS & PAPERS:**

Make up exams and papers will be available **ONLY** if you have an excused absence as defined by the university **AND** I am notified before the due date. **NO EXCEPTIONS!** Make up exams may differ from tests given in class. If you are going to miss an exam you may leave a message for me at the above listed phone number or, preferably, through e-mail.

### **LATE SUBMISSIONS**

Unless otherwise notes, all submissions are due at the beginning of class. Numerous problems are lurking out there to help you miss assignment deadlines. Computer failures, family crises, work obligations, and misreading the syllabus will all send you scrambling to complete papers on time. Plan ahead and be ready to work around problems. Late submissions are not accepted. If you know ahead of time that you will have a problem completing an assignment on time, please contact me.

### **EXPECTATIONS:**

I expect that we will all:

1. Come to every class, on time and prepared.
2. Maintain a relaxed but professional environment in class.
3. Give each other our best effort at all times.
4. Place your name tag in front of you at all times.
5. I encourage you to visit me during office hours so we can get to know each other. Perhaps you want to talk about career options, future goals & aspirations, or have questions about projects or grades.
6. Blackboard is required for this course. Look at Blackboard announcements weekly for updates, important class notices, and grades. It is your responsibility to check Blackboard regularly.
7. Students must respect the views and opinions of their colleagues. Disagreement and debate are encouraged. Intolerance or disrespect for the views of others is unacceptable.
8. Due to abuse by those who came before you, I regret to announce there is a NO LAPTOP policy in my classroom. Also, please turn off your cell phone ring tone.

9. If you have concerns, suggestions, or feedback about any aspect of this class, please voice them to me. You can always talk with me during office hours or by scheduled appointment.
10. I have no tolerance for acts of academic dishonesty. Such acts damage the reputation of the school and the degree and demean the honest efforts of the majority of students. The minimum penalty for an act of academic dishonesty will be a zero for that assignment or exam. I reserve the right to scan all submitted documents for plagiarism using such tools as Google, TurnItIn, SafeAssign and other tools.
11. If you are late to class please come in quietly and take a seat. If you must leave class early, please tell me before class starts. I would appreciate it greatly.

### **Grading Questions or Appeals:**

1. I am happy to discuss a paper or exam grade with you. Talking to me about your graded assignments is a great way to learn how to improve throughout the semester. If you wish to have a grade reconsidered, you must first submit to me a written statement outlining your reasons. This allows you to collect your thoughts and make your best case for a higher grade.
2. In order for the assignments to remain fresh in both of our minds, you must submit this appeal within 10 days of receiving the grade. The ten-day period will begin on the day the grade is posted on Blackboard.
3. Regarding writing assignments, I will re-grade the entire work, and if I was overly generous I will deduct points. Thus, your grade can go up or down on a re-grade.
4. DO NOT WAIT UNTIL THE END OF THE SEMESTER, ONCE YOU REALIZE YOU MAY NEED ADDITIONAL POINTS, TO TAKE THIS ACTION. IT WILL BE TOO LATE!

## **IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR ALL STUDENTS**

### **Scholastic Dishonesty**

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The McCombs School of Business has no tolerance for acts of scholastic dishonesty. The responsibilities of both students and faculty with regard to scholastic dishonesty are described in detail in the Policy Statement on Scholastic Dishonesty for the McCombs School of Business. By teaching this course, I have agreed to observe all of the faculty responsibilities described in that document. By enrolling in this class, you have agreed to observe all of the student responsibilities described in that document. If the application of that Policy Statement to this class and its assignments is unclear in any way, it is your responsibility to ask me for clarification. Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. Since dishonesty harms the individual, all students, and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. You should refer to the Student Judicial Services website at <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/> or the General Information Catalog to access the official University policies and procedures on scholastic dishonesty as well as further elaboration on what constitutes scholastic dishonesty.

## The Standard of Academic Integrity

A fundamental principle for any educational institution, academic integrity is highly valued and seriously regarded at The University of Texas at Austin, as emphasized in the standards of conduct. More specifically, you and other students are expected to "maintain absolute integrity and a high standard of individual honor in scholastic work" undertaken at the University (Sec. 11-801, *Institutional Rules on Student Services and Activities*). This is a very basic expectation that is further reinforced by the University's Honor Code. At a minimum, you should complete any assignments, exams, and other scholastic endeavors with the utmost honesty, which requires you to:

- acknowledge the contributions of other sources to your scholastic efforts;
- complete your assignments independently unless expressly authorized to seek or obtain assistance in preparing them;
- follow instructions for assignments and exams, and observe the standards of your academic discipline; and
- avoid engaging in any form of academic dishonesty on behalf of yourself or another student.

For the official policies on academic integrity and scholastic dishonesty, please refer to Chapter 11 of the *Institutional Rules on Student Services and Activities*.

## What is Scholastic Dishonesty?

In promoting a high standard of academic integrity, the University broadly defines scholastic dishonesty—basically, all conduct that violates this standard, including *any act designed to give an unfair or undeserved academic advantage*, such as:

- Cheating
- Plagiarism
- Unauthorized Collaboration
- Collusion
- Falsifying Academic Records
- Misrepresenting Facts (e.g., providing false information to postpone an exam, obtain an extended deadline for an assignment, or even gain an unearned financial benefit)
- Any other acts (or attempted acts) that violate the basic standard of academic integrity (e.g., multiple submissions—submitting essentially the same written assignment for two courses without authorization to do so)

Several types of scholastic dishonesty—unauthorized collaboration, plagiarism, and multiple submissions—are discussed in more detail on this Web site to correct common misperceptions about these particular offenses and suggest ways to avoid committing them.

For the University's official definition of scholastic dishonesty, see Section 11-802, *Institutional Rules on Student Services and Activities*.

## **Students with Disabilities**

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Upon request, the University of Texas at Austin provides appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) are housed in the Office of the Dean of Students, located on the fourth floor of the [Student Services Building](#). [Information on how to register](#), [downloadable forms](#), including [guidelines for documentation](#), accommodation request letters, and releases of information are available online at <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/ssd/index.php>. Please do not hesitate to contact SSD at (512) 471-6259, VP: (512) 232-2937 or via [e-mail](#) if you have any questions.

## **Religious holy days**

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A student who misses classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day should inform me of the future absences at the start of the semester, so that the applicable arrangements can be made.

## **Writing Center**

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I expect a high standard of written communication in your assessment pieces. For students struggling with this requirement, I encourage you to consider using the Undergraduate Writing Center, FAC 211, 471-6222, <http://uwc.fac.utexas.edu>. The Undergraduate Writing Center offers free, individualized, expert help with writing for any UT undergraduate, by appointment or on a drop-in basis. Any undergraduate enrolled in a course at UT can visit the UWC for assistance with any writing project. They work with students from every department on campus, for both academic and non-academic writing.

**A detailed version of this syllabus will be available to students registered for MAN 374**