COURSE DESCRIPTION

This doctoral seminar has five primary objectives: (1) survey the major theoretical perspectives and issues studied in strategic management (or strategy) research; (2) provide an interdisciplinary perspective on contemporary issues in strategic management; (3) develop students’ skills in critiquing academic research; (4) develop students’ ability to identify original and testable research ideas; and (5) develop students’ skills in presenting research ideas orally.

Because strategic management is an interdisciplinary field that draws on work in several social disciplines—especially economics, sociology and psychology—and on business fields like organization behavior, organization theory and finance, this seminar offers a broad survey of contemporary strategy research. Many of the issues examined, such as firm diversification, industry structure, inter-organizational networks, are also common themes in other disciplines such as industrial organization economics, marketing, accounting, finance, and organizational and economic sociology. Accordingly, this course may be useful to students with research interests in these disciplines.

Although strategy is a very broad field, most scholars would agree that its unifying theme is the use of various performance measures and outcomes as dependent variables. From firm survival to sales to accounting measures, strategy research explanatory focuses on a particular kind of competitive interaction a mechanism that could explain performance. At the risk of oversimplifying, strategy research generally asks at least one of the following questions: “Can we identify the winning strategy in this game?” and “Can we explain why winning strategies work?”

Another unifying theme of strategy research is that competitors have at least some freedom to choose among different strategies. Although some researchers emphasize sources of constraints rather than decision opportunities, most strategy research treats competitive outcomes as the result of crucial decisions.

While the sessions will differ somewhat in their execution, each session will involve an in-depth discussion of the articles or chapters that have been assigned for that week. For empirical articles, our discussion will address each component of the research: theory, methods, results, and the author(s)’ conclusions and discussion of implications. Our discussion will be both critical and creative. In the critical component of the discussion, we will attempt to answer the question “what should the author(s) have said and done differently?” The creative component of the discussion will address the question “what’s next in this line of research and in this general topic area?” Thus, beyond an in-depth
critique of the assigned articles, in this class we will devote a significant amount of time to raising and discussing new research questions.

An important part of this course will be your socialization into the journal review process, both as author and as reviewer. "Publish or perish" is a very relevant performance criterion for aspiring academics, and professors spend much of their time writing, revising, or critiquing articles for publication in major journals. Therefore, about two-thirds of the way through the semester, your research paper for this class will be submitted for a double-blind peer review. You will also serve as a reviewer.
Course Prerequisites:

This course is open to Ph.D. students from all departments in the University. Master's students who desire to take the course must obtain the instructor’s permission.

Course Requirements:

Class Contribution
- Ongoing Contributions 20 %
- Lead Discussions 20 %

Individual Papers 50 %
Reviews 10 %

Class Contribution

Ongoing contributions. This course is organized as a seminar, which means that you are primarily responsible for discussing the readings. You are expected to do all the readings for each session and to be prepared to discuss and comment on the readings. To facilitate adequate preparation, the number of readings for each class session has purposely been kept small. As the course will be run as a seminar, it will primarily involve loosely-structured discussion among class members. You are responsible for reading all assigned articles and coming to class prepared to discuss the questions outlined below.

Lead Discussions. For each article, one of you will be responsible for leading the discussion by providing his/her answers of the questions below. You would need to provide me with the lead discussion agreements by Friday of the week prior to the class session. Lead discussion assignments however, does not mean that you are responsible only for the article assigned to you. Each class member should come to class prepared to answer each question about each article, and should offer his/her answer or perspectives after the discussion leader, if he/she has a different viewpoint. I may also "cold-call" on students to provide answers to the questions below:

1. Motivations

What question (relationship) is the paper addressing? How clear is it? What mechanism is proposed to explain key relationships? Is there one? What framing is used to position the work with respect to other research?

2. Argumentation

What arguments are used to make the work convincing? What assumptions underlie the work? How valid are they? What "hook" does the paper use to get you into it? What data and methods are used? Do they fit the question?

3. Implications

What new findings does the paper offer? § What next steps does this work suggest or require? What problems, if any, did you find with the paper’s findings or conclusions? What implications for theory or practice arise from this research?

4. Creative Critique

How could this work be extended or refined?
Beyond answering these questions for each reading, it is important to learn to synthesize and integrate the readings in order to develop new and important research questions. To this end, you should discuss how this work is related to other articles assigned for the same class session and from prior sessions? The readings are purposefully chosen to include seminal articles, exemplary contributions, as well as works that suggest the need for changing the research agenda associated with a given area of research. Therefore, it will be important that you to read the papers carefully, as well as to step back and provide a “big-picture” perspective for the class.

**Individual Papers**
Participants will also need to write a research paper that relates a topic(s) covered in class to their own research interests. The paper should define a research question, review and critique relevant literature, develop an original theoretical argument that leads to testable propositions or hypotheses. In completing the requirements for this course you can submit either a theoretical or an empirical paper. The goal is to work on a paper of **publishable quality.**

- A theoretical paper should review extant literature and propose a theoretical extension. Both a thorough and integrated literature review, and an interesting, well-argued extension will be required.
- An empirical paper should propose a research question and design a study to address it. You do not need to have collected the data, but the design should be based on data that can be collected with reasonable effort. Developing research ideas that take advantage of existing databases of students and faculty is encouraged. Both quantitative and qualitative studies are welcome.

The paper should follow the submission guidelines of AMR for theoretical papers and AMJ for empirical papers. Papers spanning strategy and other disciplines such as accounting, finance, marketing, economics, or other disciplines are also acceptable, subject to my prior approval of the subject.

**Peer Review**
You are responsible for providing a quality review of a journal article submitted to the blind review process. Keep your review to two, single-spaced pages.

**Detailed syllabus is available to the registered participants in the course.**