

MAN 374 GENERAL MANAGEMENT AND STRATEGY
Spring 2013**Professor Violina Rindova, Ph.D.**E-mail: violina.rindova@mcombs.utexas.edu

Meeting time and place: Monday and Wednesday, 8:00-9:30 UTC 1.144

Office hours: Monday and Wednesday, 9:30-10:30 or by appointment; Office: CBA 4.244

PURPOSE OF COURSE

This course is about the creation and maintenance of a long-term vision for the organization. This means that it is concerned with both the determination of strategic direction and the management of the strategic process. As such, it deals with the analytical, behavioral, and creative aspects of business simultaneously. The course is organized around three themes in strategic management: business strategy, corporate strategy, strategic growth and renewal.

Our perspective in this course is that of the general manager whose responsibility is the long-term health of the entire firm or a major division. The key tasks involved in general management include the detection of and adaptation to environmental change; the procurement and allocation of resources; the integration of activities across subparts of the organizations; and, at the most senior levels, the determination of purpose and the setting of corporate direction.

General managers, from our perspective, are managers who are in the position to make strategic decisions for the firm. Note that such managers are not “generalists” in the sense that they need to know a little bit of everything, but not very much of anything. To be effective, general managers need to have in-depth understanding of the generic problems in all the relevant functional areas. Furthermore, they must be able to deal with problems and issues at the level of the total enterprise and its relationships with relevant external environments.

Not everyone who takes this course will ultimately become a general manager. Yet, this course will benefit virtually all students. The recent trend in the corporate world toward flatter, less hierarchical organizations has resulted in strategic decisions being made at ever lower hierarchical levels. Accordingly, even non-executives are likely to make decisions and initiate actions that have significant strategic implications. Many entry-level positions require employees’ involvement in projects that are initiated to elicit innovative and creative ideas to improve the functioning of the organization as a whole. Similarly, functional specialists need to take into account the overall needs of the business when addressing problems in their own areas and thus need to develop a keen awareness of, and appreciation for, the challenges that the corporation faces. Therefore, it is increasingly important that university graduates acquire managerial skills and understand how their actions affect the total enterprise.

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. Learn to distinguish between basic causes of business problems and attendant symptoms.
5. Practice the formulation of realistic strategic recommendations and implementation plans that balance the tradeoffs inherent in any strategic situation.
6. Enhance analytical thinking and the ability to report conclusions effectively in both written and oral form.
7. Learn how to gather and analyze information on a specific firm and the respective industry. Discuss some of the practical realities of running different types of businesses.

Instructional Method

In order to capture the pragmatic, action-oriented, and complex nature of the general management task, this course is taught through the case method. This method has been found to be particularly useful for developing professional skills in the art of diagnosing complex unstructured problems. Appendix A provides additional information on the case method and on why it is so extensively used in the study of General Management and Strategy.

Therefore, this is not a lecture course and there will be very few lectures during the semester. Most of the learning in the course is learning-by-doing – through the analyses of the cases we will discuss in class, and the independent-research projects. The readings should provide you with tools you need to analyze the cases. To conduct effective analysis of the cases, you would need to read and apply the assigned readings before class, to attend class and participate in the class discussion, and to contribute to the discussion your inferences from your independent analysis of the case. Consequently, we will not, as a rule, spend classroom time reviewing the readings; I will assume that you have done the readings and you have applied them to perform your own analysis of the cases. If you have questions about specific concepts or applications of the readings, please raise them in class. You are welcome to raise conceptual questions either at the beginning of class, or during the case discussions.

Writing Flag

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 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 you may be asked to read and discuss your peers' work. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from your written work. Writing Flag classes meet the Core Communications objectives of Critical Thinking, Communication, Teamwork, and Personal

Responsibility, established by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Materials

Required:

- 1) Grant, R. Contemporary Strategic Analysis. 7th Edition.
- 2) Case packet available from the University Co-Op. (Note: The price of the course packet includes additional cases that will be handed out in class).

In addition, as per University policies, course-related information and materials will be available throughout the semester on Blackboard. Syllabi, handouts, assignments and other resources will be available within this site. Site activities could include exchanging e-mail and exchanging files. In addition, class e-mail rosters will be a component of the sites. Students who do not want their names included in these electronic class rosters must restrict their directory information in the Office of the Registrar, Main Building, Room 1. For information on restricting directory information see: <http://www.utexas.edu/student/registrar/catalogs/gi02-03/app/appc09.html>.

Grading

Your final grade for the course will be determined as a combination of the following:

Class Contribution	25%
Individual Case Briefs (2)	15%
Group Mid-term Case Analysis (includes brief presentation)	20%
Group Final Project (includes presentation)	40%

Class Contribution

In-class discussions are at the core of the learning in this course. The discussions will cover the readings and cases listed in the schedule of classes below, as well as some additional conceptual material that I will present in class. This course makes extensive use of the case method. For this course to work as intended, it is critical that you come to class prepared to discuss the reading or case assigned. To help you prepare for class discussion of the readings and cases, I have provided you with preparation questions in the schedule of classes below. In general, you will be expected to demonstrate 1) detailed knowledge of the content of the readings and cases assigned for each class; and 2) independent analysis using the tools provided in the readings.

Given the importance of class contribution, I have outlined below what constitutes high-quality class contribution. Since you cannot participate in class discussions if you miss all or part of a class, your grade will be negatively affected by absences and tardiness. You will be allowed one absence during the semester (you do not need to provide a reason), after which absences for

whatever reason will affect your grade for class participation. The template used for grading class contribution is: absence = 0; missing part of a session or attending without participating = 1 or 2 depending on extent of absence/contribution; attending whole session plus some contribution = 3; attending whole session plus substantive contribution = 4; attending whole session plus important contribution = 5. Also, disruptive actions such as comments that distract or disrupt the class rather than contribute to the conversation, or web surfing or e-mailing during class, take away from the class discussion and may result in a penalty in the form of negative points. Class contribution will be graded for each class session. **Missing a third of the classes or more will result in a failing grade for the class.**

Typically, at the very start of each case discussion, I may call on two students, randomly, to take 1-2 minutes to answer a particular question about the case or give their view of the major issues involved. Similarly, at the end of each case discussion, I may call on students, again randomly, to summarize the key take-away lessons. Class participation may also include *unannounced* in-class quizzes on the material assigned for the class sessions in which the quizzes are held.

Many people are intimidated by the “obligation” of speaking up in class. Don’t be. Your anxiety will be reduced only through practice. Here’s the secret to cutting your stress level: BE PREPARED. If you have read the case and the readings carefully and have prepared notes with your analysis of the preparation questions provided, **you will succeed if you speak up**. Please keep in mind that the only measurable output of your preparation is your class discussion – but airtime is a scarce resource, so please use it wisely. Comments based solely on a “gut reaction” that do not show that you are using the readings to develop your analytical skills do not add much value and will be treated the same as not participating. Frequent non-quality contributions are not rewarded and in some cases may be penalized. Students who find it difficult to speak in class should schedule to meet with me early in the semester during my office hours.

Here are the criteria for making high-quality, important contributions to the learning process:

- (1) Are comments relevant to the discussion?
- (2) Do comments reveal solid grasp of the facts of the case and their implications?
- (3) Do comments reveal use of appropriate tools (from the readings) to analyze the facts of the case?
- (4) Do comments add to the knowledge in the class, i.e. do they move the discussion forward or do they repeat what has been said?
- (5) Do comments show that you have listened to the discussion and that you are able to build on the comments of others?
- (6) Are you prepared to answer when called on in class? (Let me know before class if some emergency has prevented you from adequately preparing.)

Individual Case Briefs

The main purpose of these assignments is to assess whether you are learning the key concepts of the course and applying the tools for strategic analysis properly. Appendix B lists the cases on which you have the option to write briefs and the associated questions. Please note that there is a different question for each case and that these questions may differ from the preparation

questions in the detailed session plan. You are required to submit two (2) case briefs of one (1) single-spaced page for, 12 point font, 1” inch margins all around on two cases of your choice. The brief must be exclusively your own work. Therefore, do not discuss the case with others prior to submitting your brief, and do not do outside research. **Brief submissions are due by 8 am on the day of the scheduled class discussion for the case.**

Group Projects

You will complete two components of the class in your group: your final project and the mid-term case analysis. As soon as possible, I’d like you to organize yourselves into groups of 5. Please email me with the names of group members – one e-mail per group. I reserve the right to add a member to your group if needed. At the end of the course, you will be asked to assess the contributions of each team member to the team’s work on the team project report and team project presentation. Based on your feedback, individual grades for these components of your course grade may be adjusted by an amount determined by the instructor, in order to ensure equity. During your work on the assignment, if you feel that one or more of your team’s members is/are not contributing sufficiently to the team’s work, please provide this feedback to the team member(s), along with the changes that you would like to see. Learning to work with others is essential to managerial work and an essential component of the learning in this class.

Midterm Case Analysis

You will complete your mid-term case analysis with your group. A detailed assignment and the exam case itself will be distributed in advance. The analysis should be exclusively your team’s work, which means that you may not discuss the case itself or your write-up with anyone other than your team; and you may not do research about the case from the Internet or other sources. The textual body of your analysis should not exceed 5 double-spaced typewritten pages, 12-point font, 1” margins. I will read only the first 5 pages, so please stay within assigned limits. Also, you may include 1 additional 1-page exhibit with charts, tables, or figures. As we will discuss the case in class on the day when it is due, late assignments will not be accepted. The mid-term case analysis is **due at the beginning of class March 8. In addition to the written paper, please prepare 3 summary slides to share your analysis and recommendations with your classmates on that day.**

Final Project

For this project, you will work in groups to collect information on an industry, analyze a key strategic challenge pertaining to that industry, examine how firms are responding to that challenge and propose alternative courses of action. This project serves at least four educational objectives:

1. It helps you learn how to gather, organize and analyze information on industries and firms. Do not underestimate the value of knowing how to gather and analyze information on specific industries and firms.
2. It provides a hands-on opportunity to practice your skills in strategic analysis.
3. It offers a chance to learn how to work in teams, tapping on your colleagues’

knowledge of different functional areas.

4. It is substantial writing project in the area of strategy, on which you will receive feedback that will help you improve your business writing communication skills.

Appendix C provides details about the project content and deadlines. We will also discuss the project in class as the semester progresses.

ADDITIONAL COURSE INFORMATION

1. I care about your progress in this course and will be glad to do what I can to assist you. I will hold office hours on Tuesdays and Thursdays, 3:30- 4:30 pm. I will also be available meet with you outside these times by appointment. To set up a meeting, please send me an e-mail.

2. I urge you to take notes during class. As mentioned earlier, one of the main purposes of the course is to help you develop your own personal approach for identifying and solving the key problems facing an organization. I will post slides used in class AFTER the class session. Slides related to the case discussions will not be posted.

3. Per McCombs and Management department policy, laptop computers, PDAs, cell phones, and other electronic devices should be turned off at the start of class. Accommodations will be made for students with disabilities.

4. If you miss class, please contact one of your classmates to obtain notes regarding what we have discussed in class.

5. I expect all case analyses to be your own (and your group's) work. This means that you are not permitted to gather any additional information regarding the case via the Internet or other means.

ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES

Policy on Scholastic Dishonesty. 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.

Policy on McCombs Classroom Professionalism. The highest professional standards are expected of all members of the McCombs community. The collective class reputation and the value of the undergraduate program experience hinges on this. Faculty are expected to be professional and prepared to deliver value for each and every class session. Students are expected to be professional in all respects. The classroom experience is enhanced when:

- Students arrive on time. On time arrival ensures that classes are able to start and finish at the scheduled time. On time arrival shows respect for both fellow students and faculty and it enhances learning by reducing avoidable distractions.
- Students minimize unscheduled personal breaks. The learning environment improves when disruptions are limited.
- Students are fully prepared for each class. Much of the learning in the undergraduate program takes place during classroom discussions. When students are not prepared they cannot contribute to the overall learning process. This affects not only the individual, but their peers who count on them, as well.
- Students respect the views and opinions of their colleagues. Disagreement and debate are encouraged. Intolerance for the views of others is unacceptable.
- Laptops are closed and put away. When students are surfing the web, responding to e-mail, instant messaging each other, and otherwise not devoting their full attention to the topic at hand they are doing themselves and their peers a major disservice. Those around them face additional distraction. Fellow students cannot benefit from the insights of the students who are not engaged. Faculty office hours are spent going over class material with students who chose not to pay attention, rather than truly adding value by helping students who want a better understanding of the material or want to explore the issues in more depth. Students with real needs may not be able to obtain adequate help if faculty time is spent repeating what was said in class. There are often cases where learning is enhanced by the use of laptops in class. Faculty will let you know when it is appropriate to use them. In such cases, professional behavior is exhibited when misuse does not take place.
- Phones and wireless devices are turned off. We've all heard the annoying ringing in the middle of a meeting. Not only is it not professional, it cuts off the flow of discussion when the search for the offender begins. When a true need to communicate with someone outside of class exists (e.g., for some medical need) please inform the professor prior to class.

Remember, you are competing for the best faculty McCombs has to offer. Your professionalism and activity in class contributes to your success in attracting the best faculty to this program.

Policy Regarding Re-grading Requests. In the event that you feel something was missed in the grading of your work (be it mathematical error or other), please write a brief summary of what you feel needs further attention and submit this re-read request with your original work with my comments within 1 week of receiving your grade. If you request a re-read, I will read the work again from scratch and your grade may go up or down. Each grade component is considered final one week after given to the class and will no longer be open for re-reading or discussion. I do not accept personal lobbying efforts for changing grades other than in writing.

Policy on Academic Accommodations: Upon request, the University of Texas at Austin provides appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) is 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.

Policy on Religious Holy Days: A student who needs to miss classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day should inform me at the start of the semester, so that the applicable arrangements can be made.

Writing Center: I expect a high standard of written communication in your written reports. Students struggling with this requirement are encouraged to consider using the Undergraduate Writing Center, FAC 211, 471-6222: <http://uwc.fac.utexas.edu/home>). 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.

Detailed syllabus is available on Blackboard for those registered for the class.