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LINCOLN UNIVERSITY GRADUATE PROGRAMS

Business Strategy & Decision Making
BA 380
3 Units (45 Lecture Hours)
Wednesday 12:30-3:15pm
Fall Semester 2014

Instructor: Marshall J. Burak
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Office Hours: Wednesday, 11am-12:30pm

Required Text

Essentials of Strategic Management 4th Edition; Gamble, Thompson & Peteraf; McGraw-Hill Irwin, 2015. Print Edition ISBN # 9780078112898; E-Text Edition through www.coursesmart.com, 9781259164750

Catalog Description

BA 380 – Business Strategy & Decision Making

Students are expected to develop a better understanding of business strategy approaches and techniques, and to acquire skills and knowledge relating to the decision-making process. Emphasis is on decision-making while still recognizing the importance of the specialized functions of an organization. Readings and case materials are reinforced with participation through written tests, papers, and oral presentations. This is the MBA program capstone course. (3 units) Prerequisites: BA 301, BA 304, BA 307, BA 320, BA 340, and at least two concentration courses

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Business Strategy & Decision Making

Today's business firms develop, grow and operate in an extremely complex and often fiercely competitive marketplace. Decisions that managers make must, therefore, be based on the most complete and current information available about their markets, products, technology and resource availability. Such decisions require inputs from many sources and disciplines and must, by virtue of their complexity, draw upon the skills, knowledge and experience of the entire management team. Successfully competing in a rapidly evolving global business environment depends upon management creating a strategic focus and coherent plan for growth, innovation and superior financial performance. Ultimately, it is management's careful



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consideration and blending of information, opportunity and resources that form decisions that have strategic value in terms of the continuing successful development of the firm.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This course will focus on the corporation and the set of strategic factors that underlie the basis for formulating and implementing management decisions. These strategic factors have both internal and external impact on the firm in terms of influencing both the organization of the business and its outreach to and interaction with the global marketplace. Cases will be used to illustrate how business firms develop strategic responses and management decisions to critical issues such as competitive threats, technology change, growth opportunities and financial performance. Emphasis will be placed on the analytical techniques and tools for creating useful and valid business, market and financial information that becomes the foundation for the development of strategic management decision making. In addition to a mid-term and final exam, students will be required to participate in a Strategic Management Simulation that involves the development and implementation of operating strategies and decisions that determine the Simulation company financial performance, operating effectiveness and growth. A core learning experience in this course is involving students in the process and methodology used to analyze a complex business to determine and critique the company's which strategies and decisions support and result in the successful operation and profitable growth of the company they are responsible to manage.

Instructional Methodology

I. GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

This course emphasizes a realistic look at how moderate to very large size firms develop and make strategic decisions. The approach includes an appraisal of the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities facing companies and uses real business cases as the basis for analyzing and evaluating company responses. Students are expected to have read the text and case assignments prior to class meetings. Class discussions will be based on an examination of the assigned text material and illustrative cases. The assigned textbook is to be considered a basic resource providing a presentation and explanation of strategic business concepts and the formative factors that guide and determine management decision making. The assigned textbook readings parallel case assignments and class discussion topics. It is important that both the reading and case assignments are completed in preparation for productive class discussions.

In addition to the case assignments, students will be organized into teams and participate in the operation of a company through an automated on-line simulation program.



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Student teams will be required to make repetitive decisions regarding key strategic elements of the company based on their interpretation of the firm's competitive environment, financial and operating ratios, the economic climate, and periodic problems that arise during the simulation.

Students will receive a detailed explanation of the operating characteristics of the simulation, the cost of and means of obtaining an access card required to participate in the simulation, and the nature of the operating reports the teams will receive and the nature of the decisions the teams will be required to make.

II. READING AND PROBLEM ASSIGNMENTS

Reading assignments from the text, *Essentials of Strategic Management*, provide background concepts and analytical tools useful in evaluating assigned cases.

Case assignments are used primarily for purposes of providing practice in the development of useful information forming the basis of management strategies and decision-making.

III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Successful completion of this course requires 1) an in-depth analysis of a business case including an analysis of the company's market position, strategic initiatives and focus, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, technology, competitive environment, resources and financial condition, and 2) active participation in the Strategic Management Simulation Game. Teams will be formed for both of these requirements. Each team will have a different case assigned for their analysis. The simulation game operates will all teams managing the same company but is a competitive exercise. Teams operating the Simulation company will be judged on their success or failure relative to competing teams. At the beginning of this course instructions will be provided related to these assignments including 1) development of the case analysis, assessment of the company's strategies, key decisions, financial condition and performance, evaluation of the company's successes and failures, formation of a set of recommendations and the submission of a completed team project report, and 2) the access and operating requirements for the Simulation. Time will be set aside during my course to consult with and support each team as they undertake their project assignment and engage in making company decisions in the Management Strategy Simulation. The final team case report requires and oral presentation that I will schedule and a written report due to me by December 7th.



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IV. COURSE STANDARDS

- A. Students are expected to attend each class meeting and be prepared to discuss the assigned text and case materials. Students who come to class late will not be admitted until the break period. Every member of the class is expected to participate in discussions surrounding the assigned chapter and case content.
- B. Each student is required to be an active participant in both the required team case analysis and Simulation experience.

V. BASIS FOR GRADING

- A. The Comprehensive Case Analysis assignment requires student teams to select a case to work on from a list I will provide. Once the team has selected a case, they should begin to organize their effort and assign individual members of the team specific tasks and give me a list of the team's members and their individual assignments as soon as it is complete. During the semester I will monitor each team's progress. Grades for the completed project will be based on the quality and completeness of the case analysis, the effectiveness of the team's oral presentation, and the organization and content of their written report including appropriate documentation and identification of sources and the correctness of spelling and grammatical usage of the English language.
- B. The Team Simulation exercise will be graded based on 1) the rationale behind the periodic decisions made by the team, 2) the company performance in comparison to the achievements of competing teams, 3) the demonstrated ability of the team to work together in determining their strategic decisions, and 4) the team's performance relative to making Simulation decision inputs in an on-time and complete manner.

C. Basis for Grading

Team Case Oral Presentation	25%
Team Case Written Presentation	25%
Strategic Management Simulation	30%
Class Participation	<u>20%</u>
	100%



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D. Calculation of Course Grades

Each exam and the project have a total possible point value of 100. Course grades are calculated based on the sum of the points earned on the case assignment and the simulation exercise times their respective weight. Class participation is based on each student's preparation and involvement in class discussion of the text cases assigned times its respective weight. The weighted semester point count earned by each student establishes their course grade. Letter grades are based on the following scale: A, 90-100; B, 80-89; C, 65-79. Course grading is curved depending on the overall class performance which influences the inclusion of a – or + related to the letter grade.

Course Outline and Assignments

<u>Date/Day/Time</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Reading & Case Assignments</u>
Part I The Basics of Strategy Development		
Aug. 26, Wed. 12:30-3:15pm	Strategy, Business Models, and Competitive Advantage	Text: Chapter 1
Sept. 3, Wed. 12:30-3:15pm	Charting a Company's Direction: Vision & Mission, Objectives & Strategy Team Development for Case Study	Text: Chapter 2
Sept. 10, Wed. 12:30-3:15pm	Evaluating a Company's External Environment	Text: Chapter 3 Case: Mystic Monk Coffee
Part II Strategic Actions: Strategy Formulation		
Sept. 17, Wed. 12:30-3:15pm	Evaluating a Company's Resources, Cost Position, and Competitive Strength	Text: Chapter 4 Case: Under Armour in 2013



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Sept. 24, Wed.
512:30-3:15pm

The Five Generic Competitive Strategies

Text: Chapter 5
Case: Chipotle
Mexican Grill
in 2013

Oct. 1, Wed.
12:30-3:15pm

Strengthening a Company's Competitive Position
Strategic Moves, Timing and Scope of Operations

Text: Chapter 6
Case: Nucor Corp.
in 2012

Part III Strategies for Growth and Globalization

Oct. 8, Wed.
12:30-3:15pm

Strategies for Competing in International Markets
Consultation with Teams on Case Project

Text: Chapter 7

Oct. 15, Wed.
12:30-3:15pm

Class Discussion of Lululemon Athletica, Inc.
Consultation with Teams on the Simulation

Case: Lululemon
Athletica, Inc.

Oct 22, Wed.
12:30-3:15pm

Corporate Strategy: Diversification
and the Multibusiness Company

Text: Chapter 8
Case: The Disney
Company
in 2012

Part IV Strategic Management Issues, Responsibilities and Performance

Oct. 29, Wed.
12:30-3:15pm

Ethics, Corporate Social Responsibility,
Environmental Sustainability & Strategy

Text: Chapter 9
Case: Frog's Leap
Winery in
2011

Nov. 5, Wed.
12:30-3:15pm

Superior Strategy Execution--
Another Path to Competitive Advantage

Text: Chapter 10
Case: Robin Hood

Nov. 12, Wed.
12:30-3:15pm

Review of Team Simulation Competition
Consultation with Teams on Oral Case Presentations



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Nov. 19, Wed. Course Summary and update on Team Simulation Performance
12:30-3:15pm

Nov. 26, Wed. No Class Meeting (Thanksgiving Break)

Dec. 3, Wed. **Student Team Case Analysis Presentations**
12:30-3:15pm

Dec. 10, Wed. Presentation of Team Simulation Competition
12:30-3:15pm Final Outcomes and Discussion of Results

Comprehensive Team Case Projects Due in hardcopy on Dec.10th, 2014