

# Competitive Strategy

## SYLLABUS AND SCHEDULE | Fall Quarter 2019

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### Course information

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Course code: MBA 5500-01  
# credits: 3  
Location: Pigott 204  
Class times: M 6-9pm  
First session: 9/30/2019  
Last session: 12/2/2019  
Final exam: 12/9/2019 6-7:50pm

### Instructor information

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Instructor: Eunice Y. Rhee  
Phone: 206.296.5791  
Email: rhee@seattleu.edu  
Office: Pigott 514  
Office hours: M 4-6pm and by appointment

### Course description

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Business leaders must understand the factors responsible for their firm's past performance and be able to identify internal and external changes that are most likely to help or hurt future performance. In this course, you will be introduced to strategy frameworks and tools that will help you develop the skills needed to be a successful manager with responsibility for the performance of a firm or business unit within a firm. In particular, we will focus on the frameworks and tools required to identify and diagnose critical strategic issues affecting performance, examine how firms can gain and sustain competitive advantage in the face of uncertainty and competition, and build on our understanding of the complex business environment to devise realistic solutions to address those issues. In doing so, we will examine firms from the top by assuming the perspective of a general manager and contemplate questions such as: How is this firm doing in comparison to its competitors? What should it look like in five, ten, and twenty years? What does it need to do to remain efficient, innovative, and able to adapt to a changing environment? How can it benefit its many stakeholders, including employees, shareholders, customers, and communities?

### Learning outcomes

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On successful completion of this course, you will be able to *synthesize the set of concepts and frameworks you have gained to address challenging strategic management problems*. In particular, you will be able to:

1. Analyze industry structure and environmental trends to assess industry potential;
2. Evaluate firms' competitive positioning and assess firm-level resources and capabilities;
3. Understand how mergers, acquisitions, and alliances contribute to achieving competitive advantage;
4. Formulate business- and corporate-level strategies that match the firm's strengths with opportunities in its external environment;
5. Evaluate and manage complex ethical and social issues facing firms in executing strategy and organizing the firm for strategic success.

### Required readings and materials

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#### READINGS & CASES

All reading materials and cases, not otherwise noted, can be purchased and downloaded from this webpage: <https://hbsp.harvard.edu/import/669085>

#### TEXTBOOK

Rothaermel, F. Strategic Management. 3rd edition  
(ISBN-13: 978-1259420474 | ISBN-10: 9781259420474)

## Evaluation

You will be assessed based on your individual and team participation. Please note that you must successfully complete the in-class and online portions, as well as the individual and team components of the course.

		POINTS POSSIBLE		
<b>Individual components</b>		<b>700 points</b>		
	Class engagement	200 points		
	Case memos	200 points		
	Homework	150 points		
	Final paper	150 points		
<b>Team components</b>		<b>300 points</b>		
	Homework discussion facilitation	200 points		
	Homework write-up	100 points		
<b>Total available points</b>		<b>1,000 points</b>		
A	1000–940 Superior	B– 829–800	D+ 699–670	
A–	939–900	C+ 799–770	D 669–630	Poor
B+	899–870	C 769–730 Adequate	D– 629–600	
B	869–830 Good	C– 729–700	F 599 or less	Failing

### Individual components (60%)

#### **1. Class Engagement: Preparation, attendance, & participation (200 points)**

It is expected that you attend all classes and be well prepared for each class. Since we only meet nine times during this quarter, 100% class attendance is expected. Each absence beyond this will reduce the student's final grade by one increment (i.e., A- to B+). Only official university engagements, such as scheduled sports events, are excepted from this policy. Habitual lateness (and leaving class early), for whatever reason, will be noted as evidence of low engagement.

The character of the course naturally lends itself to active exchange among participants. Thus, it is expected that you play an active role in the class discussion. Simply attending classes does not constitute a positive contribution and will not yield a high engagement grade. I will ask you to speak even if you have not volunteered, so please be ready for discussion every class. *If you are particularly worried about your class participation, please check in with me within the first two weeks of the quarter and I can work with you to help.*

When evaluating your participation in the class discussion, I will consider how effectively you put forth your arguments, as well as how well you listen to, understand, and build upon (or refute) the arguments of others. I will look for high quality (which is frequently not the same as high quantity) arguments, analyses, and questions that improve the class' collective learning. Keep in mind that comments that are redundant, tangential or seemingly irrelevant or attempts to dominate class discussion will have a negative impact on your engagement grade.

*You will be asked to complete a session review survey after each online session. Failing to complete the survey may result in a 20-point deduction from your engagement grade.*

#### **2. Case memos and Homework (350 points)**

You will choose four out of eight cases to provide an answer to one of the discussion questions in a one single-spaced page. These memos are each worth 50 points. All case memos are due by

noon of the day the case will be discussed. You are required to read and be prepared for class discussion even though you are not submitting a case memo.

There is also a total of eight homework that typically consists of articles on a certain theme. For six of these, you will submit your brief answer to the question or come up with a discussion question. Each homework submission is worth 25 points and is due by noon of the day the homework will be discussed.

### **3. Final paper (150 points)**

You will be writing a short case study (three single-spaced pages) and create your response (two single-spaced pages) related to one or more themes of the course. The topic you choose should lend itself to analysis and revolve around an actual business situation that either a) calls for a strategic decision in the near future or b) allows readers to assess a recent strategic decision. As in our case discussions during the course, your case is meant to illustrate and deepen the covered topics to become an integral part of the learning experience.

### Team components (30%)

The class will be divided into teams comprising of two members in each team. Team membership is voluntary but needs to reflect diversity in students' major, experience, and style.

### **1. Homework discussion facilitation and write-up (300 points)**

Each team will sign up to facilitate the classroom discussion of *two* homework assignments. When your team is facilitating, you do not have to submit your individual homework. Your team will have 20-25 minutes to lead an interactive discussion. Please meet with your instructor to go over your team's discussion facilitation plan. Each discussion facilitation is worth 100 points and will be evaluated by both the instructor and the rest of the class. Within one week of your discussion facilitation, you will write-up your key points as well as new leanings a one single-spaced page. These write-ups are each worth 50 points.

### **2. Peer evaluation**

Each of you will be asked to evaluate your team member at the end of the quarter to provide constructive feedback. If you receive unsatisfactory ratings, your grade will be marked down accordingly, reducing your final grade by one increment (i.e., A- to B+).

### **Instructional methods**

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To achieve the learning outcomes, this course emphasizes active learning through case discussions, experiential exercises, and interactive lectures. I will use lectures to elaborate on key theoretical models and frameworks or to reinforce crucial concepts.

I have selected a mix of business cases on a range of companies from a variety of industry settings. Each case is intended to teach us something specific, yet each can teach many things. We will not attempt to exhaust each case of all its learning experiences, but instead build up a "toolkit" of analytical tools, skills, and insights, progressively over all the selected cases. Case discussion techniques provide a chance to learn the meaning of analytical rigor in situations other than open-and-shut problems. As such, there will be many cases that do not end up neatly packaged with an "answer." You may discover that your preparation "misses" key points of a case, especially at first. This is a normal part of the learning experience.

Success in this course comes from being well prepared, which includes doing all of the readings on time, including the required textbook chapters and assigned case study. *You should plan to spend at least 6-9 hours per week, in addition to time in class, for readings, cases, and other*

*coursework. Active participation is also required.* I will direct class discussions; the quality of your learning experience will be directly determined by your degree of preparation, active listening, and participation. A much richer kind of learning takes place when one is challenged by other people who have different backgrounds and therefore do not necessarily share one's own point of view. So, if you miss a class discussion or activity, or if you show up unprepared to participate fully, then you not only deprive yourself of learning, but you also deprive your classmates of a learning opportunity.

## **Course policies**

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### LATE WORK POLICY

Be sure to pay close attention to deadlines. Assignments must be submitted by the set deadlines and will typically be graded within 7 business days. It is essential that you plan ahead for all eventualities to ensure that none of your work is late. If you have an extenuating circumstance, please contact your instructor *well before* the assignment is due to make alternate arrangements. Late assignments will be penalized 20% per day that it is late (with the first day "late" beginning after the start of the class in which the assignment is due).

### E-MAIL POLICY

I do try to respond to email within 24 hours during the week (M-F). I will not respond on weekends and holidays.

## **Other course policies**

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### CLASSROOM NORMS

During our first week, we will jointly create classroom norms (or "agreements") to which we will all abide so that we have the most productive and positive learning environment. Ethics and ethical reasoning are integrated throughout the course. *Plagiarism and cheating will provide sufficient grounds for dismissal and failing the class.*

### CELL PHONES, LAPTOPS, AND RECORDING DEVICES

Using laptops can be a distraction, both for other students and for the instructor. The temptation to attempt to "multi-task" using technology in class can also be enormous, but to do so would be extremely discourteous to the entire class, and would be a waste of your own learning opportunity. There will be opportunities during class to use your laptops. To minimize distractions and disruptions, all electronic devices (laptops, cell phones, recording, etc.) must be turned off during class except by prior agreement.

### CANVAS

We will utilize Canvas as the primary tool for communications including submissions of assignments and grades. If you have questions or need assistance on how to use Canvas, please refer to the Canvas Student Guides: <https://www.seattleu.edu/cdlihelp/>

### BUSINESS PERIODICALS

You should regularly read at least one business periodical (e.g., Wall Street Journal, Business Week, or Fortune) or follow on Twitter (e.g., @WSJbusiness, @WSJD, @BW, @Forbes, @nytimesbusiness, @Inc, @FastCompany, @businessinsider, or @HarvardBiz).

## **Academic resources**

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### LIBRARY AND LEARNING COMMONS

<http://www.seattleu.edu/learningcommons/> (This includes: Learning Assistance Programs, Research [Library] Services, Writing Center, Math Lab)

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY TUTORIAL  
(FOUND ON CANVAS AND SU ONLINE)

ACADEMIC POLICIES ON REGISTRAR WEBSITE  
<https://www.seattleu.edu/redhawk-axis/academic-policies/>

Academic Integrity Policy  
Academic Grading Grievance Policy  
Professional Conduct Policy (only for those professional programs to which it applies)

NOTICE FOR STUDENTS CONCERNING DISABILITIES

If you have, or think you may have, a disability (including an 'invisible disability' such as a learning disability, a chronic health problem, or a mental health condition) that interferes with your performance as a student in this class, you are encouraged to arrange support services and/or accommodations through Disabilities Services staff located in Loyola 100, (206) 296-5740. Disability-based adjustments to course expectations can be arranged only through this process.

NOTICE REGARDING RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATIONS

It is the policy of Seattle University to reasonably accommodate students who, due to the observance of religious holidays, expect to be absent or endure a significant hardship during certain days of their academic course or program. Please see, Policy on Religious Accommodations for Students (<https://www.seattleu.edu/media/policies/Policy-on-Religious-Accommodations-for-Students---FINAL.PDF>).

OFFICE OF INSTITUTIONAL EQUITY

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX) prohibits discrimination based on sex in educational programs or activities that receive Federal financial assistance. This prohibition includes sexual misconduct, which encompasses sexual harassment and sexual violence. Seattle U remains committed to providing a safe and equitable learning, living, and working environment. Seattle U offers emergency, medical, and other support resources, as well as assistance with safety and support measures, to community members who have experienced or been impacted by sexual misconduct.

Seattle U requires all faculty and staff to notify the University's Title IX Coordinator if they become aware of any incident of sexual misconduct experienced by a student.

For more information, please visit <https://www.seattleu.edu/equity/>. If you have any questions or concerns, you may also directly contact the Title IX Coordinator in the Office of Institutional Equity (email: [oi@seattleu.edu](mailto:oi@seattleu.edu); phone: 206.296.2824).

*\*Your learning is my primary concern. This syllabus, along with course assignments and due dates, is subject to change as we discover we need to spend more time on a particular topic and less on another.*

## Provisional Schedule

Session	Date	Topic	Preparation	Deliverables	Team deliverables
1	9/30	Course Introduction What is Strategy?	-	-	- Team sign-up (in-class)
2	10/7	External Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Complete the online module</li> <li>  - Review Chapter 3</li> <li>- Case 1: Netflix</li> <li>- HW1: Sephora &amp; Tesla</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Case memo 1</li> <li>- HW1</li> </ul>	- HW1 discussion
3	10/14	Internal Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Complete the online module</li> <li>  - Review Chapter 4</li> <li>- Case 2: Dyson</li> <li>- HW2: Uber &amp; Lyft</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Case memo 2</li> <li>- HW2</li> </ul>	- HW2 discussion
4	10/21	Generic Strategies Blue Ocean Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Complete the online module</li> <li>  - Review Chapter 6</li> <li>- Case 3: Trader Joe's</li> <li>- HW3: Nintendo</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Case memo 3</li> <li>- HW3</li> </ul>	- HW3 discussion
5	10/28	Competitive Advantage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Complete the online module</li> <li>  - Review Chapter 5</li> <li>- Case 4: Microsoft</li> <li>- HW4: Ray-Ban &amp; Coach</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Case memo 4</li> <li>- HW4</li> <li>- <u>Final paper topic</u></li> </ul>	- HW4 discussion
6	11/4	Entrepreneurial Strategy Mid-quarter Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Guest Speaker (Mr. Brad Chase)</b></li> <li>- Case 5: The New Meat</li> <li>- HW5: Digital Native Brands</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Case memo 5</li> <li>- HW5</li> </ul>	- HW5 discussion

Session	Date	Topic	Preparation	Deliverables	Team deliverables
	11/11	No Class (Veteran's Day)			
7	11/18	Corporate Strategy I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <b>Strategy Simulation</b></li> <li>– Complete the online module               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Review Chapter 8</li> </ul> </li> <li>– Case 6: Walt Disney</li> <li>– HW6: Beats &amp; Dr. Dre</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Case memo 6</li> <li>– HW6</li> <li>– <u>Final paper outline</u></li> </ul>	– HW6 discussion
8	11/25	Corporate Strategy II	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Complete the online module               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Review Chapter 9</li> </ul> </li> <li>– Case 7: Verizon   AT&amp;T</li> <li>– HW7: Amazon &amp; FedEx</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Case memo 7</li> <li>– HW7</li> </ul>	– HW7 discussion
9	12/2	Turnaround Course Wrap-up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Case 8: Lego</li> <li>– HW8: Garmin</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Case memo 8</li> <li>– HW8</li> <li>– <u>Final paper draft</u></li> </ul>	– HW8 discussion

