Course: SOM 498, Advanced Business Modules, fall 2012
Class Times: Tuesday and Thursday, 10:30 – 11:45 am & 1:30 – 2:45 pm
Location: Innovation Hall 208 (10:30) & Planetary Hall 126 (1:30)
Professor: Dr. Matt Theeke
Office: 224 Enterprise Hall
Office Hours: Thursday 12:00-1:00 pm and by appointment
E-mail: mtheeke@gmu.edu
Course Website Address: Blackboard 9.1 through “mymason” portal

Prerequisites:
Students must have completed general education requirements and all core courses (i.e., ACCT 301, BULE 302, OM 301, FNAN 301, MGMT 301, MIS 301, and MKTG 301; and senior standing).

Required Course Materials:
   Cases: The following cases are available at: http://cb.hbsp.harvard.edu/cb/access/14482924
   i. Cola Wars Continue: Coke and Pepsi in 2010, Product#: 711-462-PDF-ENG
   ii. Whole Foods Market, Inc., Product#: 705-476-PDF-ENG
   iii. Walmart Stores, Inc., Product#: 794-024-PDF_ENG
   v. Walt Disney Company, Product# 701-035-PDF-ENG
   vi. Shanghai General Motors: The Rise of a Late-Comer, Product#: HKU395-PDF-ENG
   vii. Competition case: HUGE and Digital Strategy, Product#: 712-442-PDF-ENG

Other Reading:
To supplement the cases and textbook I will also periodically assign articles from business publications that are related to course topics. Accordingly, it is also recommended that students read business publications such as the Wall Street Journal, Business Week, Fortune, The Economist, Financial Times, Harvard Business Review, etc.

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COURSE OVERVIEW, LEARNING GOALS & OBJECTIVES:

Strategic management, at its core, is the search for firm competitive advantage. This search is carried out by individuals within organizations in environments that are quite often highly dynamic and uncertain. Studying strategic management allows us to answer questions such as:

- Why does one firm succeed while a closely-related competitor fails?
- Is success sustainable or will it always be transitory?
- Why are firms in some industries (e.g. high tech) typically far more profitable than firms in other industries (e.g. airlines, steel)?
- What types of decisions can general managers make to influence the success of their firm?
- What impact do managers’ decisions have on the performance of the firm?

To capture the high level of complexity under which strategic management takes place, this course will predominantly use the case method to examine how general managers create and maintain competitive advantage for their organizations. We will focus on how managers formulate strategic decisions and manage the strategy implementation process. In regards to strategy formulation, we will employ a variety of explicit frameworks for strategic action. These frameworks are important as they will often guide the case study evaluations. In regards to strategy implementation, most general management decisions are multi-functional in nature, thus we will integrate lessons from other functional area courses (e.g., accounting, finance, marketing) to explore and reconcile the tensions that accompany implementing strategic decisions across the entire organization.

The learning goals are the following:

- Our students will be effective communicators
- Our students will have an interdisciplinary perspective
- Our students will be knowledgeable about team dynamics and the characteristics of effective teams
- Our students will be critical thinkers

The objectives are:

- To be familiar with the current literature of strategic management
- To understand the complexities and challenges of multi-functional organizational problems
- To focus attention on strategic issues confronting contemporary businesses
- To facilitate the development of strategic thinking
- To further refine research, analytical, critical-thinking, team building, and communication skills
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Session</th>
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<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
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<th>Case</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Tue</td>
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<td>Introduction and Course Overview</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Thu</td>
<td>30-Aug</td>
<td>Strategic Mgmt Process / Analyzing a Case Study</td>
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<td>Chapters 1 &amp; 2</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Tue</td>
<td>4-Sep</td>
<td>External Analysis: Industry</td>
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<td>Coke &amp; Pepsi in 2010</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Thu</td>
<td>6-Sep</td>
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<td>Coke &amp; Pepsi in 2010 (Cont.)</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Tue</td>
<td>11-Sep</td>
<td>Internal Analysis: Resources and Capabilities</td>
<td>List of group members due</td>
<td>Chapter 4</td>
<td>Whole Foods Market, Inc.</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Thu</td>
<td>13-Sep</td>
<td>Internal Analysis: Measuring Performance</td>
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<td>Phase 2 of Exam I</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Tue</td>
<td>25-Sep</td>
<td>Update on Industry Report</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Thu</td>
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<td>Feedback on Exam I</td>
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<td>Business-level Strategy: Cost-based (cont.)</td>
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<td>Wal-Mart Stores, Inc. (cont.)</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Tue</td>
<td>9-Oct</td>
<td>No Classes - Columbus day</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Thu</td>
<td>11-Oct</td>
<td>Business-level Strategy: Differentiation-based</td>
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<td>Chapter 7</td>
<td>Apple in 2012</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Tue</td>
<td>16-Oct</td>
<td>Business-level Strategy: Innovation and Entrepreneurship</td>
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<td>Thu</td>
<td>18-Oct</td>
<td>Corporate Strategy I: Diversification and Vertical Integration</td>
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<td>Walt Disney Company: The Entertainment King</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Tue</td>
<td>23-Oct</td>
<td>Corporate Strategy I: Diversification and Vertical Integration (cont.)</td>
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<td>Walt Disney Company: The Entertainment King</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Thu</td>
<td>25-Oct</td>
<td>Corporate Strategy II: Acquisitions and Alliances</td>
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<td>Chapter 9</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>Tue</td>
<td>30-Oct</td>
<td>Team case presentations</td>
<td>Hard copy of slides due</td>
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<td>10</td>
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<td>Thu</td>
<td>1-Nov</td>
<td>Team case presentations</td>
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<td>11</td>
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<td>8-Nov</td>
<td>Team case presentations</td>
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<td>23</td>
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<td>13-Nov</td>
<td>No Class - Instead everyone is present at the case competition on Friday, November 16th</td>
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<td>20-Nov</td>
<td>Global Strategy</td>
<td>Chapter 10</td>
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<td>13</td>
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<td>Thu</td>
<td>22-Nov</td>
<td>Thanksgiving Holiday</td>
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<td>Tue</td>
<td>27-Nov</td>
<td>Strategy Implementation</td>
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<td>Thu</td>
<td>29-Nov</td>
<td>Strategy Implementation (cont.)</td>
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<td>15</td>
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<td>Tue</td>
<td>4-Dec</td>
<td>Governance, Ethics and Leadership</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Thu</td>
<td>6-Dec</td>
<td>Course Wrap up and Review</td>
<td>Firm analysis due</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Tue</td>
<td>18-Dec</td>
<td>Exam II</td>
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The schedule and its contents are subject to change.
GRADE WEIGHTING AND SCALE

1. Exam 1       20       A = 93-100  C+ = 77-79.99
3. Class participation 15       B+ = 87-89.99  F = Below 70
4. Industry report 10       B = 83-86.99
5. Firm report 15       B- = 80-82.99
6. Case competition presentation 15

Total points 100

Exams:

There are two course exams. No make-up exams will be given without prior permission. The course exams may consist of case analysis, short answer and multiple-choice questions. Students will be required to apply concepts and frameworks from assigned readings and cases and in-class discussions. More details will be forthcoming.

Class Participation:

This is a case-based course that is heavy on discussion and interaction, and 15% of your grade will be based on your contribution to class discussion and activities. Needless to say, not coming to class prepared to discuss the topic for that day will make it difficult to score well on this, as well as other components of the grading assessment. Furthermore, if you do miss a class, it is your responsibility to find out from your classmates what material was covered and what handouts you may have missed.

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 familiarized yourself with the case and readings, 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” generally do not add much value. Participation that does not add any value is treated the same as not participating. Frequent non-quality contributions are not rewarded and in some cases may be penalized.

What does class contribution entail? While not an exhaustive list, here are some key ideas:

1. Asking appropriate questions
2. Being a good listener
3. Making evidence-based comments and recommendations
4. Respecting the opinions of others
5. Distinguishing between data, opinions, and guesswork
6. Building on the comments of others
7. A high contribution-to-words ratio (i.e. simply taking up “air time” is not a valued contribution)
8. Demonstrating an understanding of the case

Ideally, a contribution will increase the average class understanding of the discussion taking place. This is a lofty goal, yes, and not all comments will have this effect, but keeping this criterion in mind should help you ferret out good and not-so-good comments.

*Case introduction and conclusion*

At the very start of each case discussion, I will sometimes call on one or two students, randomly, to take a few minutes to answer questions 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 findings of the case and the take-away lessons to be learned from it. You will only be called on in this manner once during the semester. Your input at this time builds towards your class contribution grade.

Even if you are not called on in this manner, though, everyone should still come to class prepared with answers to the case questions and an action plan for the key protagonist in the case.

The GMU catalog states the following on attendance policies for graduate and undergraduate classes:

Students are expected to attend the class periods of the courses for which they register. In-class participation is important to the individual student and to the class as a whole. Because class participant may be a factor in grading, instructors may use absence, tardiness, or early departure as de facto evidence of non-participation. Students who miss an exam with an acceptable excuse may be penalized according to the individual instructor's grading policy, as stated in the course syllabus.

*Team Selection:*

As some of the course activities will be completed in teams, please select your own teams of five students. Since diversity and close coordination is a key part of management in dealing with complex, multi-functional organizational challenges, please consider complementary functional expertise and individual schedules and location to ease coordination. To the extent possible, I will try to accommodate your team selection requests, but there may be instances where we need to add team members or rebalance teams to ensure that we comply with the case competition requirements.

*Contributions to Team Projects*

Throughout the semester you will be involved in various group projects. Like other professional settings, it is critical that all team members are effectively contributing to the group’s performance. To ensure that all students are participating, team members will be asked to provide feedback about other members’ contributions and this feedback will contribute to the final grade that individual students receive for team projects.
Industry and Firm Reports (Medical Devices Industry):

Both reports will be completed in teams. The industry report consists of researching and analyzing an assigned industry. The firm report consists of researching and analyzing an assigned firm in the industry. Both reports must be typed and not exceed 5-double spaced pages, excluding exhibits, with 1" margins and standard fonts (i.e., 11 or 12-point). The reports will be broadly evaluated on incisive analysis, the application of appropriate concepts and frameworks, the logic of arguments (qualitative and quantitative), and presentation (professionalism, persuasion, clarity, flow, spelling, grammar, etc). Exhibits are highly recommended to enhance the text. Graphics, tables, and bullets will help to make points in the most concise way and to clarify issues discussed in the text. Exhibits should be germane to the analysis and arguments, and should be referenced as appropriate in the text. Note, however, that the point of the information presented in the exhibits must be covered in the writing of the report. Please make sure all appropriate materials are referenced, use a broad range of references, and provide current and complete references (title, source, date, etc.). More details will be forthcoming.

Case Competition Presentations:

Huge and Digital Strategy is the case for the fall 2012 case competition. The case competition presentations must not exceed 15 minutes and all team members must speak. All teams must provide a hardcopy of their PowerPoint slides (3 slides per page) on the assigned date. The presentations will be evaluated based on the following criteria: identification of key issues facing the case company, validation of why they are key issues (qualitative and quantitative), validation of whether recommended strategies address the key issues, validation of why recommended strategies would work (qualitative and quantitative), and presentation (professionalism, persuasion, enthusiasm, clarity, flow, spelling, grammar, etc). Support your arguments with facts and when data or information is missing, make reasonable assumptions, which you can articulate and defend. More details will be forthcoming. For more information please refer to the case competition website: http://som.gmu.edu/som498

Assignment policy:

All assignments and exams must be handed in on schedule and in-class (no e-mails). Late assignments and missed exams will drop a letter grade for every day they are late. You are to work only with your team members on the team assignments, not with other members of the class or anyone outside this section. Team members will receive the same grade, but if the team feels a particular student(s) did not adequately contribute, please do not include his/her name on the assignment. At the same time, please be fair and provide ample communication and time. That student will be given an individual assignment to be assigned by the Professor.

All work should be the original product of those turning in the assignment and uphold the University’s Honor Code. If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 703-993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the ODS. More information about the Honor code and other University policies can be found at the following links:

University Catalog: http://catalog.gmu.edu University Policies: http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu