Course overview: This capstone strategic management course explains why some firms outperform others. The course takes an integrative, multi-functional approach to the kind of broad organizational issues confronted by executives. We will examine critical strategic issues that require a general management approach, using all the core business functions covered in the SOM curriculum, rather than a strictly functional one. An integrative perspective is essential because the formulation and implementation of effective strategies requires a precise understanding of the interrelationships among the different functions and the relationships of these functions to the business environment. Thus, this course represents the synthesis course for the SOM.

Learning Goals:

- Will be effective communicators
- Will have an interdisciplinary perspective
- Will be knowledgeable about team dynamics and the characteristics of effective teams
- Will be critical contributors, thinkers, ‘askers’, questioners and doers

The course objectives are:

- To familiarize 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

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).

**Course Materials:**
Required:  
2. Access course pack at: [https://cb.hbsp.harvard.edu/cbmp/access/16840423](https://cb.hbsp.harvard.edu/cbmp/access/16840423)


**Honor Code:**
You probably are already familiar with this, but we expect you to know and follow the GMU honor code. ([http://catalog.gmu.edu/content.php?catoid=15&noid=1039&returnto=search#Honor](http://catalog.gmu.edu/content.php?catoid=15&noid=1039&returnto=search#Honor))

Specifically, we expect that:

A. Exams will be closed book. The use of study aids, memoranda, books, data or other information is **not** permissible during the course exams.

B. You will complete original work for this class. Research is important, but you must cite all your sources for all papers and presentations in this course. You may **not** paraphrase or quote without proper reference. You may **not** use materials prepared for other courses. You may not use material prepared by other students in the same or other sections of this course, past or present. You can feel free to ask your instructor if you are unsure what constitutes original work and what constitutes plagiarism.

C. In order to insure equity across sections of 498, electronic means will be used to check originality of work. Written projects must be submitted to [SafeAssign](http://www.irc.gmu.edu/safeassign/) prior to submitting them to the professor. See [http://www.irc.gmu.edu/safeassign/](http://www.irc.gmu.edu/safeassign/) for info about using this software.

**Grading Weights and Scale:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Grade Range</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exam 1</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>A =93-100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exam 2 (cumulative)</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>A- =90-92.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class participation</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>B+ =87-89.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry report</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>B =83-86.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firm report</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>B- =80-82.99</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total points</td>
<td>100</td>
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**Exams:**
The course exams will consist of case analysis, short essays, true or false, 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:**
Since this course is a discussion/case-based course, your participation is critical to the learning
experience. Much of the learning that will take place in this class comes from the chance to express ideas, listen to what others have to say, and discuss these ideas in order to develop your critical-thinking skills. Please take advantage of this opportunity to gauge and hone your communication skills. To do this you must prepare all assigned materials and participate in the in-class discussions, exercises and assignments. Do not underestimate the value of what you and your classmates have to say, as we are all knowledge bases. Because your participation is vital to the success of the class as a whole, daily participation grades will be recorded (feel free to meet with me as often as you like to discuss your current participation grades). Grades for class participants will depend on both the quality and the frequency of participation. Quality is much more important than frequency but a person with frequent high quality participation will merit a better grade than one with occasional high quality participation. Grades will be assigned each class based on: Students who show evidence of careful analysis by using facts and evidence from the assigned materials to make arguments, as appropriate; student’s participation fits in with the flow of class discussion and demonstrates that he/she has been listening to and reacting to other’s points of view; student is able to influence the class to consider important avenues that the class neglected; student is able to engage constructively in debating points with other students; and student presents recommendations justified by his/her analysis and/or by the discussion in the class. Less value is placed on participation that repeats case facts without analysis or that disrupts the flow of the class discussion without good reason. Students will be called upon randomly to answer questions pertaining to the readings. If for some reason you are not fully prepared on a particular day, let me know before class so that I do not embarrass you inadvertently. I realize that work and traffic can present challenges to on-time attendance, but everyone is aware of this and should plan ahead to overcome these difficulties. Please note that you will not be successful by simply attending class and consistently being unprepared. The professor may randomly call students from time to time to discuss course challenges, growth opportunities, and individual/team learning experiences.

**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 participation 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 without an [acceptable](#) excuse may be penalized according to the individual instructor’s grading policy, as stated in the course syllabus.

**Team Formation:** Either the professor or the students will select teams of five students, and a team leader. Since diversity and close coordination is a key part of management in dealing with complex, multi-functional organization challenges, please consider complementary functional expertise and individual schedule and location to ease coordination.

**Industry and Firm Analysis Reports:**

Both reports will be completed in teams. The industry report will consist of researching and analyzing an assigned industry ([News Paper Industry](#)). The firm report portion will consists of researching and analyzing an assigned firm in the industry. Each report must be typed and not exceed 5-double spaced pages ([APA style](#)), 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, conversational tone, thought transition, 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 listed on the blackboard.

Case Competition Presentations:
The case competition presentations must not exceed 15 minutes and all team members must speak. All teams must provide a hardcopy of their Power Point slides (3 slides per page; 10 to 12 slides) on Wednesday, Oct 30th & Nov 6th, 2013. 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), did recommended strategies address the key issues, validate why recommended strategies would work (qualitative and quantitative), and presentation (professionalism, persuasion, enthusiasm, conversational tone, thought transition, spelling, grammar, etc). Support your arguments with facts and when data or information is missing, make reasonable assumptions that you can articulate and defend. Study the case. Know the case, and present it with passion. Note: Point papers, 3x5 cards, and or talking papers are highly discouraged when presenting as they are all considered to be distractions.

Assignment Policy:
All assignments and exams must be handed in on schedule and in-class (no-emails). 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.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Date(s)</th>
<th>Topic(s)</th>
<th>Assignments and Class Reading</th>
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| 1       | Aug 28  | Introduction to Course | Team formation & chap assigns.  
(8 teams; 5 students per team; team leader) |
|         |         | What have you heard?!  
Provide two strategies? | |
| 2       | Sep 4   | What is Strategy?  
How do strategies impact you?! | Chap. 1 Guided discussion, observation and practice.  
Read current business related news article:  
Strategic Thinking |
| 3       | Sep 11  | The Strategic Management Process | Chap. 2  
Read current business related news article.  
Interactive Exercise: (Small Wins/True North) |
| 4       | Sep 18  | External Analysis: Industry Structure, Competitive Forces,  
& Strategic Groups  
**Case 1:** Chipotle | Chap. 3  
Read current business related news article.  
Class reads the case and turns in a **“one page”** analysis report. |
| 5       | Sep 25  | Internal Analysis: Resources, Capabilities & Activities & | Chap. 4  
Read current business related news article.  
Teams draw for firms and presentation order. |
| 6       | Oct 2   | Competitive Advantage and Firm Performance & Business Strategy:  
Differentiation, Cost Leadership, & Integration | Chap. 5 & 6  
Industry Analysis Report due (no exceptions!) |
| 7       | Oct 9   | **In-class Exam 1**  
**Chaps 1-6** | Multiple Choice Format  
50 questions (2 points each) = 100 points |
| 8       | Oct 16  | Business Strategy: Innovation & Strategic Entrepreneurship & | Chap. 7  
Read current business related news article.  
Discuss Exam 1 |
| 9       | Oct 23  | **Case 2:** redBus | Read current business related news article.  
Class reads the case and turns in a **“one page”** analysis report. |
| 10      | Oct 30  | Corporate Strategy: Vertical Integration & Diversification | Chap. 8  
Read current business related news article.  
Start in-class case competition (Oct 28th- Nov 8th)  
Case Study: “AmTran Technology LTD”  
(Teams 1-4) |
| 11      | Nov 6   | Corporate Strategy: Acquisition, Alliances & | Chap. 9  
Cont’d In-class case competition |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Details</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nov 12</td>
<td>Networks</td>
<td>(Teams 5-8)&lt;br&gt;Note: Names due of the top two teams taking part in the school–wide case competition by:&lt;br&gt;Saturday, Nov 9th.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov 13</td>
<td>Global Strategy : Competing Around the World</td>
<td>Chap. 10&lt;br&gt;Note: School-wide Case Competition Friday, Nov 15, 2013, 1:00 p.m. to 6:45 p.m., Enterprise Hall Room 80, Competition Case: “AmTran Technology LTD” (Attendance is mandatory!)&lt;br&gt;(One to two paragraph analysis of case competition due at the end of competition).</td>
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<td>Nov 13</td>
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<td>Chap. 11&lt;br&gt;Read current business related news article.</td>
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<td>Nov 14</td>
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<td>Thanksgiving Recess!</td>
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<td>Nov 15</td>
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<td>Chap. 12&lt;br&gt;Firm Analysis Report due (no exceptions!)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec 4</td>
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<td>Dec 4&lt;br&gt;Corporate Governance, Business Ethics, and Strategic Leadership</td>
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<td>Dec 11</td>
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<td>Dec 11&lt;br&gt;Reading Day!</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec 18</td>
<td>In-class Exam 2; Cumulative Chaps 1-12</td>
<td>Dec 18&lt;br&gt;In-class Exam 2; Cumulative Chaps 1-12&lt;br&gt;True and False Format 50 questions (2 points each) = 100 points</td>
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