Course: SOM 498, Advanced Business Modules, spring 2015
Class Times: Monday and Wednesday, 9 – 10:15 am & 12 – 1:15 pm
Location: Innovation Hall 206
Professor: Dr. Matt Theeke
Office: 224 Enterprise Hall
Office Hours: Wednesday 10:30-11:30 pm and by appointment
E-mail: mtheeke@gmu.edu
Course Website Address: Blackboard 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:
   i. Cola Wars Continue: Coke and Pepsi in 2010, Prod#: 711-462-PDF-ENG
   ii. Whole Foods Market, Inc., Prod#: 705-476-PDF-ENG
   iii. Walmart Stores, Inc., Prod#: 794-024-PDF_ENG
   v. Walt Disney Company, Prod# 701-035-PDF-ENG
   vi. UTV and Disney: A Strategic Alliance (A), Prod#: 910-M43-PDF-ENG
   vii. Southwest Airlines: In a Different World, Prod#: 910-419-PDF-ENG
   viii. Competition: Methanex: Developing Strategy in a Commodity Industry

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 Business Week, Fortune, The Economist, 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
## CLASS SCHEDULE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
<th>Rothaermel Reading</th>
<th>Case</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Wed</td>
<td>21-Jan</td>
<td>Introduction and Course Overview</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Mon</td>
<td>26-Jan</td>
<td>Strategic Mgmt Process / Analyzing a Case Study</td>
<td>Chapter 1 &amp; 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Wed</td>
<td>28-Jan</td>
<td>External Analysis: Industry</td>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
<td>Coke &amp; Pepsi in 2010</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Mon</td>
<td>2-Feb</td>
<td>External Analysis: (continued)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Coke &amp; Pepsi in 2010 (Cont.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Wed</td>
<td>4-Feb</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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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Mon</td>
<td>9-Feb</td>
<td>Internal Analysis: Measuring Performance</td>
<td>Chapter 5</td>
<td>Whole Foods Market, Inc. (cont.)</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Wed</td>
<td>11-Feb</td>
<td>Business-level Strategy: Cost-based</td>
<td>Chapter 6</td>
<td>Wal-Mart Stores, Inc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Mon</td>
<td>16-Feb</td>
<td>Business-level Strategy: Cost-based (cont.)</td>
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<td>Wal-Mart Stores, Inc. (cont.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Wed</td>
<td>18-Feb</td>
<td>Business-level Strategy: Differation-based</td>
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<td>Apple in 2012</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Mon</td>
<td>23-Feb</td>
<td>Exam Review</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Wed</td>
<td>25-Feb</td>
<td>Exam I</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Mon</td>
<td>2-Mar</td>
<td>Update on Industry Report</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Wed</td>
<td>4-Mar</td>
<td>Feedback on Exam I</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Mon</td>
<td>9-Mar</td>
<td>No Class - Spring Break</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Wed</td>
<td>11-Mar</td>
<td>No Class - Spring Break</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Wed</td>
<td>18-Mar</td>
<td>Corporate Strategy I: Diversification and Vertical Integration</td>
<td>Industry Report Due</td>
<td>Chapter 8</td>
<td>Walt Disney Company: The Entertainment King</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Mon</td>
<td>23-Mar</td>
<td>Corporate Strategy I: Diversification and Vertical Integration (cont.)</td>
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<td>Chapter 8</td>
<td>Walt Disney Company: The Entertainment King</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Wed</td>
<td>25-Mar</td>
<td>Corporate Strategy II: Acquisitions and Alliances</td>
<td>Chapter 9</td>
<td>UTV and Disney: A Strategic Alliance</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Mon</td>
<td>30-Mar</td>
<td>Team case presentations</td>
<td>Hard copy of slides due</td>
<td>Methanex</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Wed</td>
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<td>Team case presentations</td>
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<td>Methanex</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Mon</td>
<td>6-Apr</td>
<td>Team case presentations</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Wed</td>
<td>8-Apr</td>
<td>Team case presentations</td>
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<td>Methanex</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Mon</td>
<td>13-Apr</td>
<td>Global Strategy</td>
<td>Chapter 10</td>
<td>UTV and Disney: A Strategic Alliance (cont.)</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Wed</td>
<td>15-Apr</td>
<td>Global Strategy / Firm Report</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td>Fri</td>
<td>17-Apr</td>
<td>Case Competition</td>
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<td>Methanex</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Mon</td>
<td>20-Apr</td>
<td>Strategy Implementation</td>
<td>Chapter 11</td>
<td>Southwest Airlines: In a Different World</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Wed</td>
<td>22-Apr</td>
<td>Strategy Implementation (cont.)</td>
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<td>Southwest Airlines: In a Different World(Cont.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Mon</td>
<td>27-Apr</td>
<td>Governance, Ethics and Leadership</td>
<td>Chapter 12</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Wed</td>
<td>29-Apr</td>
<td>Course Wrap up and Review</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Mon</td>
<td>4-May</td>
<td>Exam II</td>
<td>Firm report due</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 (Video Game 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 (12-point - Times New Roman). 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:

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://business.gmu.edu/som498/](http://business.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.

E-mail: I will occasionally send e-mail messages to the entire class. I will use the GMU mailing list associated with this class.

Honor System and Code: Honor System and Code: The Honor System and Code adopted by George Mason University will be enforced for this class: [http://oai.gmu.edu/the-mason-honor-code/](http://oai.gmu.edu/the-mason-honor-code/). In your work on all written assignments, keep in mind that you may not present as your own the words, the work, or the opinions of someone else without proper acknowledgement. You also may not borrow the sequence of ideas, the arrangement of material, or the pattern of thought of someone else without proper acknowledgement. Please note: Faculty are obligated to submit any Honor Code violations or suspected violations to the Honor Committee without exception.

Business Library Liaison Information: Jo Ann J. Henson, MLIS Business and Economics Liaison Librarian; Fenwick Library Fairfax Campus: [http://infoguides.gmu.edu/business](http://infoguides.gmu.edu/business)

Standards of behavior: The mission of the School of Business at George Mason University is to create and deliver high quality educational programs and research. Students, faculty, staff, and alumni who participate in these educational programs contribute to the well-being of society.
High quality educational programs require an environment of trust and mutual respect, free expression and inquiry, and a commitment to truth, excellence, and lifelong learning. Students, program participants, faculty, staff, and alumni accept these principles when they join the School of Business community. In doing so, they agree to abide by the following standards of behavior:

- Respect for the rights, differences, and dignity of others
- Honesty and integrity in dealing with all members of the community
- Accountability for personal behavior

Integrity is an essential ingredient of a successful learning community. Ethical standards of behavior help promote a safe and productive community environment, and ensure every member the opportunity to pursue excellence. The School of Business can and should be a living model of these behavioral standards. To this end, community members have a personal responsibility to integrate these standards into every aspect of their experience at the School of Business. Through our personal commitment to these Community Standards of Behavior, we can create an environment in which all can achieve their full potential.

**Disability**: If you have 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. Please take care of this during the first two weeks of the semester. More information about ODS is available at http://www.gmu.edu/student/dsc

**Religion**: Students who will miss class for religious reasons should inform me of their anticipated absences as soon as possible.

**Counseling center**: George Mason University has a counseling center that can provide assistance if you find yourself overwhelmed by life, want training in academic or life skills, or the like. More information is available at http://www.gmu.edu/departments/cscdc

**Writing**: Unless otherwise specified, all writing assignments should be formatted as follows: double-spaced, Times New Roman, 12-point font, and 1-inch margins. To cite and reference professional or academic sources, please use APA style. Specific instructions for in-text citations and referencing are found in the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 6th Edition or at http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01

George Mason University has a writing center that can help you improve your English writing skills. http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/

**Inclement weather and campus emergencies**: Information regarding weather-related changes in the University’s schedule (e.g., closing or late opening) will be provided on the GMU website and via MasonAlert. Students sign up for the Mason Alert system to provide emergency information of various sorts at https://alert.gmu.edu.

An emergency poster exists in each classroom explaining what to do in the event of crises and that further information about emergency procedures exists on http://www.gmu.edu/service/cert.

**Cell phones & devices**: Cell phone and devices are distracting. Please turn off all audible signals before class.