

**MGT 439 Business Strategy  
COURSE SYLLABUS for Summer I 2015**

**Course Instructor**

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Welcome to MGT 439 – Business Strategy. This is an online course. During this course, you will learn about the world of managing operations. The purpose of this course is to provide a business capstone for the study of the overall functioning of various types of organizations

The **best** way to contact me is through email (either directly or through eCollege). All e-mails **must** include MGT 439 and a brief subject line and use proper email etiquette. I will do my best to reply to emails that include the appropriate subject line within 24 hours Monday-Friday (and probably just as quick on the weekend as well!).

**Course Description**

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This course includes a study of strategic planning including mission statement development, analysis of the external environment and internal organizational factors, development of strategic alternatives, selection of appropriate alternatives, implementation of strategies, and competitive strategies and dynamics. Special emphases are given to the integration and coordination of the functional areas within the enterprise. The case method will be used to provide practical experience in analysis and decision-making in the solution of business problems.

**Course Objectives**

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- Understand the nature of competition and industries at an advanced level.
- Understand how external forces such as social, political/legal, economic, and technological, influence strategic decision-making and firm performance.
- Understand the sophisticated relationships among the functional areas of an organization (marketing, human resources, production, finance, and accounting) and how effective strategic planning requires a concerted effort among all functional areas.
- Understand strategy research, including extensive use of the internet as a research tool.
- Apply the strategic management model to the analysis of an ongoing enterprise, including industry, environmental, and firm assessments; firm, business, and functional strategic assessments; development and evaluation of strategic alternatives; and strategic implementation and control.

**Course Required Textbooks**

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John Parnell. Strategic Management: Theory and Practice, 4th Edition. Sage. ISBN: 978-1-4522-3498-4.

**Course Grading Information**

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A unique consideration in this course is a requirement for students to demonstrate a satisfactory level of competency or knowledge on several specific elements of the course. For these topics or problems a variety of approaches may be used including: timed exams and group projects. Scoring of the course grade in the grading process is shown below.

Exams (2 at 100 pts each; Multiple Choice and Case Assignment)	200
Group Business Plan or Strategic Audit	100
Total	300

Percentages for course grade level are as follows:

A =	300 - 270
B =	269 - 240
C =	239 - 210
D =	209 - 180
F =	179 - 0

**Extra credit work will NOT be assigned so please do not ask.**

Students are held individually responsible for the information contained in the University catalog. Failure to read and comply with University regulations will not exempt students from whatever penalties they may incur.

**Exams:** There will be two exams given to assess your understanding of course material. Exams will be available on the first day of class, and will consist of 25-30 multiple choice questions as well as a written assignment (case analysis) worth 70-75 points. Please see the schedule on the last page of this document for the due date. The exams **will be timed** and can only be accessed once; therefore, once you begin, you may not stop and come back to it later. **Please note: If a student misses an exam, the student will earn a grade of zero. Makeup exams will not be given.**

**The following formatting guidelines for all written assignments should be used:** typed using 12-point Times New Roman font, double spaced, one-inch margins all around, page numbering on bottom of page, no header or footer, and student name, assignment information, and date in upper left-hand corner.

The exam component of the course measures your individual ability to understand the concepts, principles, problems, and practices of operations management. Therefore, you **must do and submit your own work**. In accordance with the Texas A&M University-Commerce Code of Student Conduct Section 5.b [1, 2, 3], the penalties for students guilty of academic dishonesty include disciplinary probation, suspension, and expulsion.

### **Group Project Information**

The group project will be done in teams of 3-5 members and handed in via the dropbox in eCollege. You only need to submit one assignment for all the individuals on the team—in other words, each team member does not have to submit the assignment as I will give grades to all those whose names appear on the received document.

During the first week of class, there will be a discussion board for students to form groups (3-5 students). The first goal is twofold: First, there should be consensus among the members in regards to selecting the Business Plan or the Strategic Audit option for their project. Second, the group needs to determine their business name and product/service (if they choose the Business Plan option) or group name and company (if they are acting as consultants and submitting a strategic audit). Groups will email the professor ([alex.williams@tamuc.edu](mailto:alex.williams@tamuc.edu)) this information along with their student names before the end of Week 1.

The professor will then add these members to a Group Discussion Board setup in eCollege in order for students to collaborate on projects. While it is not mandatory for groups to use the discussion board as their primary form of communication, doing so will allow the professor to track the group's progress and offer advice and suggestions along the way. So, while this is preferred method, I realize there are other (richer) forms of group communication tools that you are more than welcome to use.

The following formatting guidelines for all written assignments should be used: typed using 12-point Times New Roman font, double spaced, one-inch margins all around, page numbering on bottom of page, no header or footer, and student name, assignment information, and date in upper left-hand corner.

### **Group Option 1: Business Plan**

The purpose of this assignment is to offer you the opportunity to analyze your immediate environment and exercise your creativity and ability to discover and exploit opportunities by using strategic management concepts. This assignment differs from the strategic audit in that it requires a more detailed knowledge of specific business characteristics that are typically not available when analyzing the larger firms (i.e. cost of square foot to rent a commercial property, the cost of importing a specific product, the cost of flyers or an ad in the local paper). Also, I find that constraining oneself to a new business places a limit on the budget (i.e. bootstrapping) that can realistically be used to implement a plan. For example, when analyzing a case or performing a strategic audit on a large company (e.g. Apple), your budget is almost infinite—this is not the case with new ventures. The plan will be graded based upon creativity, timeliness, specificity, depth and breadth of analyses, and SUPPORT for your business idea, as well as your team members rating of your contribution. Please refer to the attached business plan outline for the structure of your business plan. The length of the business plan should be between 20-25+ pages excluding appendices.

**Group Option 2: Strategic Audit**

The purpose of this exercise is to act as consultants and analyze a large corporation, its environments, and apply strategic management concepts to find insightful strategic options for this firm. Based on an existing corporation, your team will prepare a written strategic analysis applying strategic management concepts, *with the goal of suggesting some type of improvement strategy based on your analysis and what you've learned in class*. This will be a team project; the firm and industry will be selected from the list below on a first come, first serve basis for each group (in other words, no two groups will have the same company). The audit will be graded based upon timeliness, specificity, depth and breadth of analyses, and SUPPORT for your recommendations, as well as your team members rating of your contribution. Please refer to Strategic Audit of a Corporation in Appendix 1.A on pages 34-41. You should use this outline as a guide for your project. You may also want to refer to chapter 12 for additional guidance. The length of the strategic audit should be between 20-25 pages excluding appendices.

*Company List (in no particular order):*

Walt Disney	iRobot
Whole Foods	Amazon
Ben & Jerrys	Warby Parker
Michael Kors	Proctor & Gamble
McDonald's	Zynga

***Additional Course Particulars***

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**SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:** The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

**Office of Student Disability Resources and Services  
Texas A&M University-Commerce  
Gee Library  
Room 132  
Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835  
Fax (903) 468-8148**

[StudentDisabilityServices@tamu-commerce.edu](mailto:StudentDisabilityServices@tamu-commerce.edu)

## TENTATIVE SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES

**Please Note:** The instructor reserves the right to change this schedule as circumstances may dictate. All changes to this schedule will be announced on the course homepage.

Date	Topic	Assignment
Monday 6/8 - Wednesday 6/10	<b>Course Introduction – Getting Started</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read the course syllabus</li> <li>• Read, sign, and submit Academic Honesty form.</li> <li>• Post on the About Me discussion board</li> <li>• Form teams, email member names to Dr. Williams</li> </ul> <p><b>Signed Academic Honesty</b> <b>DUE: Wednesday, June 10</b></p>
Thursday 6/11 - Wednesday 6/17	<b>Lesson 1</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Case Analysis Information &amp; Suggestions</li> <li>• Ch 1: Fundamentals of Strategic Management</li> <li>• Ch 2: Industry Competition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Choose group project option, choose company or industry, &amp; email information to Dr. Williams</li> </ul> <p><b>DUE: Monday, June 15</b></p>
Thursday 6/18 - Wednesday 6/24	<b>Lesson 2</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ch 3: External Environment: Political &amp; Legal Forces</li> <li>• Ch 4: External Environment: Social &amp; Technological Forces</li> <li>• Ch 5: Managerial Ethics and Corporate Social Responsibility</li> </ul>	<p><b>Exam 1</b> <b>DUE: Wednesday, June 24</b></p>
Thursday 6/25 - Wednesday 7/1	<b>Lesson 3</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ch 6: Corporate-Level Strategies</li> <li>• Ch 7: Business Unit Strategies</li> <li>• Ch 8: Functional Strategies</li> <li>• Ch 9: Strategy Formulation</li> </ul>	
Thursday 7/2 - Wednesday 7/8	<b>Lesson 4</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ch 10: Strategy Execution: Organizational Structure</li> <li>• Ch 11: Strategy Execution: Culture and Leadership</li> <li>• Ch 12: Strategic Control</li> </ul>	<p><b>Exam 2:</b> <b>DUE: Monday, July 6</b> <b>Group Project</b> <b>DUE: Wednesday, July 8</b></p>