



Instructor: Derek Ruth, PhD	Office: Fine Arts 201B
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Class Meeting Time: Wed., 6:30pm to 9:30pm	Office Hours: One hour before class, or by appt
Classroom: Lewis 004	

**Required Materials:**

- *Essentials of Strategic Management* by Hill and Jones
- Business Strategy Game simulation available at [bsg-online.com](http://bsg-online.com) (further instructions and access codes will be circulated during the first week of class; approximate price is ~\$43).

**Course Objectives**

This course will emphasize strategic management issues from a general management perspective. In particular, the goals of this course are to:

- Develop an understanding of key concepts and issues in business strategy;
- Develop and apply diagnostic and analytical tools that aid in strategic thinking;
- Develop an ability to integrate concepts, principles, and skills learned in specialized courses;
- Develop a more holistic sense of what organizations do and how individuals contribute to the overall success of the company; and,
- Enhance communication skills.

By the end of the course, you will be able to:

- Analyze industry structure and environmental trends to assess industry potential;
- Assess a firm’s resources and capabilities for their potential to generate a competitive advantage;
- Explain how firms can add value across diverse lines of business;
- Identify a firm’s international strategy;
- Identify a firm’s generic business strategy;
- Identify a firm’s organizational structure;
- Assess the state of a company’s corporate governance;
- Perform a value chain analysis to identify a company’s key primary and support activities.

To a great extent, this course will emphasize the process of strategic problem analysis and solution. In other words, the emphasis is on how well you can *think*. Creativity, hard work, and courage will be highly valued. Your preparation for and contribution during class are extremely important to achieving the objectives of this course.

**Course Design**

To achieve the course objectives, the course will include a variety of techniques. The textbook provides a framework for organizing strategy concepts and principles. Because of the applied and integrative nature of the subject, in-class discussions will be a critical element of the course. Analyses of companies and other outside readings will provide additional opportunities to apply strategic management concepts and principles. Finally, the simulation will provide an opportunity to apply and integrate students’ knowledge of strategic management and all the functional areas in a competitive situation. It will be critical for you to have thoroughly read and prepared the material for each class.

## Assessment

Grades will be based on the following course components and points:

Component	Points	Level
<b>Application Papers</b>		Team
(1) Application Paper #1 (solo)	75	Solo
(2) Application Paper #2 (solo)	75	Solo
(3) Debrief	50	Solo
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>200</b>	
<b>Executive Briefs (5 total during the semester)</b>		
(4) Executive Briefs (4 of 5 count)	300	Team
<b>Simulation</b>		
(5) Strategic Plan Section 1 (Projections)	50	Team
(6) Strategic Plan Section 2 (Proj. + Actual)	50	Team
(7) BSG Gradebook	100	Solo + Team
(8) Global Leader Board Bonus*	40*	Team
(9) Presentation to Board of Directors	100	Team
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>300</b>	
<b>Other</b>		
(10) Peer/Group Evaluation	50	Solo + Team
(11) Final Exam	150	Solo
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>200</b>	
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>1,000</b>	
<b>*This is a pure bonus over and above other points earned. Points are awarded as 10 points per category reached and you may only earn 10 points in any one category. In other words, you must hit the leader board for all four different measures, and not just the same measure on two different occasions. In theory, you could score up to 1,040 points in this course, but you are only graded based on a total of 1,000</b>		

Many of these assignments will be completed as a part of a team. To help make sure that everyone gets the grade they earned, I will ask you to complete peer evaluations of your team members during the semester. A student's score on the group work may be reduced based on the feedback from their team (in other words, you may forfeit some or all of the grades of group assignments in addition to losing peer evaluation points). Free riding is not a good idea!

## Grades

- Final letter grades will be assigned according to the table below. However, I reserve the right to raise all students' grades across the board (e.g., perhaps to raise the top score on the exam to a perfect one and raising all others by the same amount). Grades will be roughly allotted according to Dominican's guidelines for undergraduate grade distributions:

Grade	Points
A	>=930
A-	900-929
B+	870-899
B	840-869
B-	800-839
C+	770-799
C	740-769
C-	700-739
D	600-699
F	<600

## Course Requirements

In order to help us achieve the course objectives and evaluate progress towards their achievement, the following tasks will be required during the course of the semester. This is only meant to familiarize you with what is coming up. More detailed information will be provided for each requirement later in the semester.

### **(Solo) Application Papers**

For these two assignments, you will adopt a single company for analysis. The application papers provide an opportunity to apply key concepts of the course to your firm and industry. The assignment details will be posted on Canvas. If you work for a non-profit organization or in some other setting where you believe it would be difficult to apply the material, please contact the instructor before beginning this assignment.

Evaluation of these assignments will focus on: (1) the effectiveness and logic of the analysis; (2) how well you draw on the text, readings and/or discussions to use the correct tools; and (3) the quality and clarity of your writing. Your analysis should be incisive, supported by factual examples, and distinguish between what is critical and what is merely important. It should be strong on analysis. Your writing should be clear, unambiguous, and well organized. You should present the information in a highly professional way, similar to the executive briefings that are written for the cases.

### **(Group) Executive Briefs**

In a departure from some other business courses, we will be analyzing current companies using live documents and articles, as opposed to standalone cases. The emphasis on company analyses is to use the tools from class to make sense of a company's strategy. We will generally focus on one or two tools and chapters for a given company. All students are expected to read and prepare for class discussion of the case, regardless of their involvement in preparation of the written executive briefing.

The overall objective of each briefing is to **use the tools and frameworks** from the readings and class discussions in order to demonstrate a new and deeper understanding of the issues that the company is dealing with. In short, the briefings are about demonstrating mastery of concepts and not about storytelling regarding the company at hand. It is important to apply the tools and frameworks presented in the readings and class discussions in the executive briefings.

Whether you are submitting an executive briefing as part of the audience (i.e., a non-presenter) or as a presenter, **all assignments will be done as PowerPoint decks**. More guidelines on presentation style and formatting will follow. The briefings will be submitted electronically **PRIOR TO THE START OF CLASS**. The team presenting a given company will be expected to provide a hard copy to me prior to the presentation.

Some general guidelines for the content of the executive briefings:

- Use the tools and frameworks from the textbook. This is the most critical consideration: **use the right tools, and use them both thoroughly and correctly**.
- Dig down to the most important elements. It is not easy to get a rigorous analysis into an executive briefing. Ignore irrelevant or marginal information in order to make a concise, convincing analysis.
- Approach the case as consultants. You are not obligated to be a cheerleader for a given company. You have been hired by these companies to analyze their situation. Think about your client and what they would like to see in your report. Avoid laundry lists. Focus and organize your analysis.

### **Simulation**

The simulation is an opportunity for students to integrate what they have learned in the course and make strategic decisions as if they were running a company. The simulation is an online, computer-based game where you will compete against your classmates in the sensor manufacturing industry. With the exception of the first orientation assignment, all of the work will be done in teams. [The exception would be in the extreme case of a member being fired from a group.]

## **Peer/Group Evaluation**

This course will be different from many others in that group work represents a significant portion of your grade. As such, I will be evaluating the performance of your group on a regular basis and your groupmates will ultimately rate your performance within the group. All group members are expected to be active and continuous participants in their group's efforts. **Lack of active participation in the group as well as absenteeism from class, group meetings, or other group efforts may result in the reduction or forfeiture of one's grades, as well as the potential removal from one's group.** To further protect against slackers and social loafing, you will be evaluating your fellow groupmates as part of their grade.

## **Exam**

The exam will be online, consisting of short answer questions, usually requiring only a few sentences to answer. The focus of the exam will be application of concept: using the tools in class to answer questions. In particular, the questions will tend to involve two cases from class as well as the BSG simulation. Makeup exams will be given when arranged prior to the exam date.

## **A Final Note on Grades**

If a student has questions or concerns about any particular grade or overall performance in the course, please discuss these issues with the instructor as soon as possible.

## **Course Policies**

- Any student with a documented disability needing academic adjustments or accommodations is asked to speak with me during the first two weeks of class. All discussions will remain confidential. Students requesting academic accommodations must first register with Disability Support Services in Lewis Hall, Room 132. The office may be reached by calling 708-524-6822.
- **Attendance is critical** to success in this course. Throughout the semester, I will be meeting with groups and individuals regarding various deliverables, giving hints, and making sure that you are on track. The first five minutes of class are absolutely critical in this regard, so being late is something to be avoided. Although arrangements can be made in the case of legitimate excuses, more than three missed classes in a semester put a student's performance at risk. In the case of more than three absences, a student may forfeit some or all of their grade or be removed from the course.
- The instructor may dismiss a team member from the team if he/she fails to contribute to the team efforts. Lack of contribution includes missing most team meetings, coming to meetings unprepared, and/or showing a lack of cooperation and teamwork. Come to me early if you think there might be a problem developing. I will give you advice at that point, but my hope is that disputes can be resolved within the team without my direct interference. If that proves to not be possible, I will meet with the entire team to discuss ways to correct the situation. If these measures still fail, the student will be dismissed from the team and will be required to fulfill the course requirements on an individual basis. If this is not feasible, the individual will receive a zero for those assignments. It is expected that some students may contribute more in one component than in another, but slackers risk forfeiting some or all of their group grade components if they are not contributing to their group.
- The professor reserves the right to make changes to this syllabus and other parts of the course. Most often, this occurs in the case of weather emergencies or in the case of a major public event. Any changes will be announced in class or on Canvas. Students that miss class are responsible for obtaining this information.
- Unless otherwise indicated, all assignments are due at 11:59pm on the date assigned. Late assignments will be penalized by a **one letter grade** reduction. Quizzes cannot be taken late. Missed quizzes cannot be made up (however, your lowest quiz scores will be discarded and only the top ones count toward your final score).

- I will communicate with you throughout the semester via Canvas and e-mail. I use this as a way to send you reminders about upcoming events and assignments, to tell you things that I forget to mention in class, to provide you with additional materials, etc. You are responsible for regularly checking for messages from me.
- Any e-mail you send me should have “GSB 791” as the first part of the subject line. This will help me sort out the important messages you send from the less important messages that I receive.
- Stuff happens, and I am happy to make reasonable accommodations. However you need to make allowance for the unexpected when planning your work. For example, if there is an online quiz or an assignment that needs to be submitted through Canvas, keep in mind that sometimes computers crash. If you work far enough ahead that you can give me a reasonable amount of time to fix a problem, I will. If something is due at midnight and you start at 11:30 and have trouble, you may be out of luck.
- I will be happy to talk with you about any individual grade you receive. Some of the grading for this class is subjective, and I take the fairness of my grading very seriously. If you have any reason to think that a mistake was made please bring that to my attention immediately. However **I will only entertain grade protests within one week from when the grades are posted on Canvas.**
- GSB 791 is a graduate-level capstone course in the Brennan School of Business. Students should have completed a significant portion of coursework for their majors before enrolling in this course. If this is not the case, please see the instructor immediately.
- The University is dedicated to respecting religious diversity. If there are particular days for which you need accommodation for practice of your religious beliefs, please notify me in advance so that arrangements can be made.
- All work submitted in this course should meet professional standards and conform to the specific instructions for the assignment. Written work should be clear, unambiguous, and well organized; it should have no grammatical, spelling, or typographical errors, and it must be presented in PowerPoint format. If a student needs additional assistance with writing, please consult the Dominican Writing Lab: [http://www.dom.edu/literacy/writing-lab\\_math\\_clinic](http://www.dom.edu/literacy/writing-lab_math_clinic)
- All assignments will be submitted, graded and returned electronically.
- Plagiarism, cheating, or any other form of academic misconduct will result in sanctions up to and including a course grade of F. Plagiarism occurs when a writer uses someone else’s language, ideas, or other original material without acknowledging its source. To prevent plagiarism, you need to correctly cite your sources. Learn how to cite your sources and how to paraphrase well. If you have any questions about what is necessary to be academically honest, please ask!

**Approximate Course Schedule: Please see Canvas  
for precise dates and times as well as live updates)**

Wk 1	Intro to Course Syllabus SCA Chapter 5 – Business Strategy Intro to BSG	Intros Groups Assigned Team Contracts
Wk 2	Chapter 3 – External Environment	
Wk 3	Chapter 4 – Internal Environment Intro to Executive Briefs	Practice Round 1 BSG Quiz 1 Due
Wk 4	Chapter 1 - Intro to Strategic Plan	Practice Round 2 Application Paper #1 Due
Wk 5	Executive Brief 1 Chapter 2	Competition Round 1 BSG Quiz 2 Due
Wk 6	Chapter 6	Competition Round 2
Wk 7	Executive Brief 2	Strategic Plan Section 1 Due
Wk 8	Executive Brief 3	Competition Round 3 Competition Round 4
Wk 9	Chapter 7	Competition Round 5 Competition Round 6
Wk 10	Executive Brief 4 Chapter 8	Application Paper #2 Due
Wk 11	Executive Brief 5	Competition Round 7 Competition Round 8
Wk 12	Review of BofD Decks Review of Strategic Plan Decks	Board of Directors Deck Due Complete Strategic Plan Due
Wk 13	<b>BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING</b>	
Wk 14	Debrief Exam Prep	Competition Round 9
Wk 15	Exam (online)	Competition Round 10