

**The Charles H. Kellstadt Graduate School of Business
DePaul University**

**ECO 526: Business Strategy
Winter 2022**

Dr. Brian A. Thompson
Bthomp24@depaul.edu

Contact Information

Office: 6th Floor Economics Department
E-mail: bthomp24@depaul.edu

Hybrid Live Class Sessions: Tuesdays via Zoom 5:45 p.m. – 7:15 p.m.
Join from PC, Mac, Linux, iOS or Android: Join from PC, Mac, Linux, iOS or Android:
<https://depaul.zoom.us/j/92447089451?pwd=bk8zTVBKMUxxSEFYVHI3QWdrVTJ1QT09>
Password: 884872

Office Hours: Mondays 10:30AM-11:30AM & 5:00PM – 6:00PM, Wednesdays 4:30pm-5:30pm and by appointment
Join from PC, Mac, Linux, iOS or Android:
<https://depaul.zoom.us/j/96729521328?pwd=NDJVRkpJb3lXZi9JNXRpMk9qRjJwdz09>
Password: 862074

Course Format

This course will be conducted in a hybrid format. Please take a few minutes and watch the video in the Course Resources section of D2L titled “How to Approach this Class”. In this video, I provide details about how to maximize your learning experience through using all the available resources across the class. It is important to distinguish “Hybrid” from the “Asynchronous”. In the Hybrid format, we are meeting on a weekly basis on Wednesdays at 5:45pm, as we would on campus but via Zoom. Whereas in an asynchronous format, there is no expectation that you attend class at a specified time. Because of the shortened time we have in each class session, I have pre-recorded content videos for you to view on your own schedule. This will allow us to use our class time more effectively for discussions, in-class activities, and extensions on the course content in a more engaging way. We will further augment our class sessions with discussions in D2L throughout the course. To actively engage in this course, you will need access to the following resources, and I also recommend that you engage in the following activities noted below:

- Computer with internet connectivity
- Email account (Please check your DePaul account regularly)
- Check D2L regularly (Important information will be posted in the News section)
- Read the course content (i.e. Assigned readings consisting of articles and textbook sections)
- Watch the related content videos prior to the upcoming class

Communication

Please feel to reach out with any question you have via email (I work to respond within 24 hours). If the available office hours times are not convenient, please email me so that we can coordinate an alternative time to meet. For assignment feedback, I generally return cases and quizzes within 7-10 days of the established due date. All group feedback will be made available to the entire team through the submission folder.

Course Goals and Description

A. Overview and Objectives

Within a biological context, the Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines strategy as “An adaptation or complex of adaptations (as of behavior, metabolism, or structure) that serves or appears to serve an important function in achieving evolutionary success.” This definition captures the basic approach to strategy we take in this class. In business, “adaptations of behavior or structure” translate into the formulation of the firm’s business plans and policies, and how they change in response to various conditions and incentives. “Achieving evolutionary success,” translates into generating and sustaining surplus for the firm’s owners. Throughout the term, we will discuss various concepts and frameworks used to analyze and formulate business strategies. You will be introduced to several tools and techniques for diagnosing a firm’s competitive position, identifying managerial and organizational issues, evaluating alternative plans of action, and anticipating the consequences of alternative decisions.

Although the overall course structure ultimately aims to help you develop and organize a framework for business strategy, the “toolbox” approach we take implies that this class cannot be as structured as other disciplines, like accounting or statistics, which begin with a set of principles, and then build to more involved problems and applications. Strategy is not as linear, and is complicated throughout. We will be learning new tools -and going back to the old ones- to answer questions that arise throughout the class.

B. Learning Outcomes

- Students will gain proficiency in strategic terminology and fundamental frameworks (Porters Five Forces, Game Theory, Segmentation, Value Assessments, etc).
- Students will be able to analyze business challenges and opportunities through structured assessment tools using economic fundamentals.
- Students will be able to communicate their business strategy assessments verbally and through visual communication tools.
- Students will enhance their collaboration skills through considerable group learning activities in-class and remotely.
- Students will be able to analyze the fundamentals of competitive advantage sustainability by assessing business strategies and business models.
- Students will gain proficiency using various environmental and industry assessment tools through case study assessments and content quizzes.

C. Methodology

Our approach will be heavily inductive. The main intention is to understand and become familiar with the application of several concepts and frameworks through analysis and discussion of examples and cases. This will then help us develop broader principles about decision-making and strategy, which we can then apply in a wide variety of business and managerial contexts.

Good cases are often times ambiguous and complex. The frameworks and concepts we will learn and discuss will help us identify insights and solutions. The lectures and assigned readings will complement the cases by providing useful background information, additional examples, and further explanations of the important concepts. For a case discussion to be valuable, it is essential that you come prepared.

It is also important that you deal with the cases as you find them: unless explicitly recommended, please do not do additional research to find outside or post-case data on the firm or industry, as this will be a spoiler of sorts. If you have post-case or inside information, you will have the opportunity to share it at an appropriate point during the discussion.

D. Assignments

Case Assignments (Group): Groups will write a report on the assigned questions in preparation for our case discussion. This report should not exceed three typed single-spaced pages, and it is due in D2L prior to class for that particular case discussion. Please note the minimum size font is 11 with 1" margins. For written case reports, please submit your report in a MS Word doc. or docx. format in the D2L submission folder. Late assignments are not accepted in this course.

Class Participation and Engagement (Individual): Preparation and participation are vital in this class, as in any class based on case and class discussions. I will not take attendance, but you cannot participate if you are not present, so frequent absences will likely lead to a reduced participation grade. Learning opportunities are maximized when all students are actively engaged in the class discussion. Active engagement means not only that you have prepared the material, but that you are also paying attention to the comments of other students and seeking opportunities to make comments that move the discussion forward. Case discussions take a large portion of class time, so there will be ample opportunity for everyone to participate. More specifically, I consider the following in assessing a student's participation:

- **Relevance:** Are your comments clearly related to the case and to the comments of others?
- **Advancement:** Does your comment move the class discussion forward?
- **Fact-Based:** Have you used specific data from the case, readings, or personal experiences to support the assertions that you are making?
- **Logical:** Is your reasoning consistent and logical?

Strategy Content Quizzes (Individual): The Strategy Content Quizzes will focus on core content areas covered through week 4 of the course for quiz #1 and for the period following quiz #1 through week 8. Material will relate to the readings and course discussions where students will have an opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of the content through application. The format for the quizzes will be a combination of T/F, multiple choice, and short essay questions.

E. Course Evaluation

		Total Point Value
Case Assignments (Group)	(3 at 200pts each)	600
Strategy Content Quiz (Individual)	(2 at 150pts)	300
Participation & Engagement (Individual)		100
	Total Points Available	1000

Grading Scale *

930-1000 Points	=	A
900-929 Points	=	A-
870-899 Points	=	B+
830-869 Points	=	B
800- 829 Points	=	B-
770- 799 Points	=	C+
700-769 Points	=	C
600-699 Points	=	D
0-599 Points	=	F

** Please note that I work to provide feedback on assignments in 7-10 days following the submission due date. This can vary, as case assignments take a considerable amount of time to assess.*

F. Course Materials:

-*Strategy Essentials*, by Sonia Marciano, NYU Stern School of Business, 2010. Available at:

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/38572769/Stern-Strategy-Essentials>

-A course packet, which includes a number of case readings. Please sign-in and purchase using this link:

<https://hbsp.harvard.edu/import/891891>

G. Additional Course Materials:

I will post additional readings and lecture/case slides on D2L. Students are responsible for checking the site periodically to download the additional materials and case discussion and preparation questions. I will not distribute these materials in class, so please get them in advance as needed.

H. Topics and Dates

Week 1 - 1/4

- Topic: Introduction, Basic Economics of Strategy, and Value Creation and Capture
- Readings: Marciano (pp. 4-25)
- F. Scott Morton. "Why Economics Has Been Fruitful for Strategy." *Financial Times*, Mastering Strategy Series, 4 Oct 1999.
- M. Porter. "What Is Strategy?" *Harvard Business Review*, Nov/Dec 1996, Vol. 74-6.

Week 2 -1/11

- Topic: Value Creation and Capture
- P. Ghemawat. "Competition and Business Strategy in Historical Perspective," *Business History Review*, Spring 2002, Vol. 76.
- M. Porter, "The Five Competitive Forces that Shape Strategy," *Harvard Business Review*, January 2008, Vol. 86-1.

Week 3 - 1/18

- Topic: Industry Analysis
- Readings: Marciano (pp. 26-41)
- F. Dalen, Are Porter's Five Competitive Forces Still Applicable? University of Twente, 2014.
- J. Chevalier. "The Pros and Cons of Entering a Market," *Financial Times*, Mastering Strategy Series, 1 November 1999.

Case: Online Discussion (Article and questions to be posted)

Week 4 - 1/25

Topic: Competitive Advantage

Readings: Marciano (pp. 61-69)

D. Collis and C. Montgomery, "Competing on Resources," *Harvard Business Review*, July/Aug 1995, Vol. 73-4.

P. Ghemawat, "Sustainable Advantage," *Harvard Business Review*. September-/October 1986, Vol. 64-5.

Case Due: Trader Joe's (Feedback provided, Non-graded, Group self-assessment)

Week 2 /1

Topic: Segmentation and Strategic Position

Readings:

M. Porter, "Industry Segmentation and Competitive Advantage," Chapter 7 in *Competitive Advantage* (New York: The Free Press), p. 231-272.

Levie, "Competing Against the Big Guys," *Tech Crunch*, October 30, 2011

Assignment Due: Strategy Content Quiz #1

Week 6 - 2/8

Topic: e-Harmony Case Discussion & Game Theory

Topic: Game Theory and Co-opetition

Readings: Marciano (pp. 42-61)

Brandenburger and B. Nalebuff, "The Right Game: Use Game Theory to Shape Strategy." *Harvard Business Review*, July/August 1995, Vol. 74-4.

A. Greenwald, and J. Khan, "Cooperation. The Do's and Dont's," in *Competition Demystified*, Portfolio, 2005.

Case Due: e-Harmony Case

Week 7 – 2/15

Topic: Organization and Boundaries of the Firm

Readings:

Piskorski, M., "Note on Corporate Strategy," Harvard Business School Background Note 705-449, Revised 2/7/2006.

Pillado, Gonzalez, Esme., Demistifying Network Effects, Stories of Platform Design. 11/7/2019. <https://stories.platformdesigntoolkit.com/nfx-cc1dd3aba061>.

Case Due: N/A

Week 8 – 2/22

Topic: The Role of Judgment in Organizational Decision-Making

Readings:

Hansson, S. O. (1994). Decision theory. *A brief introduction. Department of Philosophy and the History of technology. Royal Institute of Technology. Stockholm.***

** (Please read pages 5-22)

Sen, A. (1985). Goals, commitment, and identity. *JL Econ. & Org.*, 1, 341.

Case Due: Burberry's New Challenges

Week 9 – 3/1

Topic: Dynamics and Sustainability

Readings: Marciano (pp. 82-95)

Van Alstyne, M. W., Parker, G. G., & Choudary, S. P. (2016). Pipelines, platforms, and the new rules of strategy. *Harvard business review*, 94(4), 54-62.

M.de Jong and M.van Dijk, "Disrupting Beliefs: A New Approach to Business Model Innovation," McKinsey Quarterly, July 2015

Case: N/A

Week 10 – 3/8

Topic: Uber vs. Didi Case Discussion & Content Quiz Review

Case: Uber vs. Didi: The Race for China’s Ride Hailing Market

Week 11 – 3/15

Topic: Content Exam Class Discussion & Course Wrap-up

Assignment Due: Strategy Content Quiz #2

I. Academic Integrity Policy

As a condition of their enrollment in this course, students are expected to understand and abide by DePaul University’s Academic Integrity Policy (AIP) as outlined in [http://offices.depaul.edu/oa/faculty-resources/teaching/academic integrity/Documents/AcademicIntegrityPolicy_2012.pdf](http://offices.depaul.edu/oa/faculty-resources/teaching/academic%20integrity/Documents/AcademicIntegrityPolicy_2012.pdf) A violation of the AIP will result in sanctions, including a failing grade for the course.

J. Dean of Student’s Office

The Dean of Students Office (DOS) helps students in navigating the university, particularly during difficult situations, such as personal, financial, medical, and/or family crises. DOS assists students with Absence Notifications to faculty, Late Withdrawals, and Community Resource Referrals. They also have resources and programs to support health and wellness, violence prevention, substance abuse and drug prevention, and LGBTQ student services. You may contact DOS at <http://studentaffairs.depaul.edu/dos/>.

K. Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD)

Students who feel they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss their specific needs. All discussion will remain confidential. To ensure that you receive the most reasonable accommodation based on your needs, contact me as early as possible in the quarter (preferably within the first week or two of the course) and be sure to contact one of the CSD offices for support and additional service. Lincoln Park: Student Center 370, (773)325-1677; Loop: Lewis Center 1420. (312)362-8002.

