Introduction

Welcome to Business Strategy. This course serves as the capstone experience of your MBA program. As you have worked through the program (and in much of your work experience), you have learned how to work within each functional area of an organization (accounting, finance, marketing, operations, information systems, etc...), now it will be your opportunity to experience how a manager or owner pulls information from each functional area to formulate and implement a strategy for the organization.

This is a challenging course of study, but if you will put in the time to learn what is required of you, this course has the power to shift your thinking. It also has the power to prepare you for new opportunities in your profession and other areas of your life. I look forward to taking this journey with you.

In this class, you will complete four modules: foundations of strategy, the strategy process, historical/theoretical perspectives, and integration. Through these modules you will learn the process of analysis, formulation, and implementation of business level strategies (the AFI process). We will also learn to view strategic direction through different theoretical lenses (five forces and market position, resource-based view or VRIO, blue ocean, strategic positions over time, and innovation). The AFI process and these theoretical lenses help shape how an organization views its mission and implements its strategy as it works toward achieving its vision. Learning this process will help you better understand how to evaluate and improve the organization your work for or the organization you own. By completing this course of study, you should be better prepared to build or improve a company’s competitive advantage.

Instructor Information

Instructor Information: As a student, employee, manager, teacher, coach, university administrator, and professor, I have spent the last 20 years studying, learning, teaching, and researching about the experiences people have within within organizations. I have been particularly interested in the experiences organizations have in markets and how organizations are shaped by and help shape the markets in which they exist. This journey has taken me through four college degrees (all from different institutions and in different areas of study), work in the mortgage industry, high school teaching and coaching, work as a university professor and administrator, and service in church and the community.

In this class we will spend much of our time focused on helping you master the content of strategic management, I also hope we will find time to learn from each other's experiences and as we each select the next step along the pathways we will pursue. You and I have uniques experiences and as we study the content of business strategy together, we can share how it has applied of influenced what we have done and what we hope to do.
Communication: My preferred contact method for the content of this class is through Brightspace email. For any other communication, or if something goes wrong with Brightspace, please use: janders0@westga.edu. I also hope to connect with you on linkedin. Please allow two days for an email response from me.

email address: janders0@westga.edu (please use this not brightspace)

Course Description and Policies:

Course Description: An integrative capstone course providing an executive viewpoint of strategy formation and management of an enterprise. Students analyze complex business situations in order to determine an organization's strategies for long-run survival and growth in competitive markets, and examine techniques for analysis of environmental conditions and trends, opportunities and threats, and resource strengths and limitations. Focus is on developing plans and implementing and controlling those plans at both the strategic and operating levels. Students use real-time case studies that cover policy formulation and administration. A strategy simulation is also used.

Course Learning Objectives (Related to WebMBA Learning Objectives): By the end of this course you should have an improved ability to:

- analyze, interpret, and apply financial and other business data necessary to make business decisions using appropriate quantitative and/or qualitative tools (1.1 - knowledge & skill); and
- assess the multiple impacts of changes in corporate-level, business unit (SBU) level, and functional level strategies (5.2 - skill).

Course Delivery and Workload: This course is designed to be asynchronous. As such, there are no specific times students will meet together. However, there are a number of specific times assignments are due. Please follow the course schedule closely. It is anticipated that the workload for this course will be between 10 and 12 hours per week. I do reserve the right to adjust the schedule as needed. Such adjustments will be shared with you via email or posted online.

Student Effort and Integrity: As this is the capstone experience of your MBA degree, I expect you to put your best work into each assignment and engage in learning. You should act with civility and be completely honest. Please remember that if an assignment is an individual assignment, you are committing academic dishonesty if you discuss the assignment with anyone else prior to all assignments being completed and graded. If you are not honest in your work on an assignment you will receive a “o” for that assignment and may receive a “F” for the course, depending on the severity of the infraction (as deemed by me). Please follow all instructions with exactness, especially when completing assignments/exams.

Course Materials

Course Readings: Required readings are listed on the course schedule and are included on
brightspace. They are also available online through “Galileo” which is the statewide virtual library available through your home school.

**Recommended Additional Readings (not required reading, but worth your time):**
- Atlas Shrugged. (any edition);
- A weekly business periodical (i.e. BusinessWeek Magazine, The Economist); and
- the www.mbaaoath.org.

**Simulation:** As part of this class you must register for the Capsim Simulation. You can register online at www.capsim.com. Once on the site, just look for the Georgia WebMBA and your cohort number. This is a team assignment so have all team members register in one company (Andrews, Baldwin, Chester, Digby, Ferris, or Erie). The cost for the simulation is approximately $60. This should be completed prior to Wednesday night in the first partial week of class.

**Assessment of Course Objectives**

In order for me to assess your mastery of the course content and your ability to apply this material to an organization’s decisions and processes, I will evaluate you on five areas of performance:
- Reading Reflections (Individual),
- Quizzes (Individual),
- Case Discussions (Team and Individual),
- The Capsim Simulation (Team), and
- Written Final Exam (Individual).

Each is discussed below. Each of these five categories will be allotted 20% of your final grade.

The grading scale will be:
- 100-90% = A;
- 80-89% = B;
- 70-79% = C;
- Below 70% = F.

**Reading Reflection:** Each week you are assigned to read an article or several articles. Some are short, others are longer. Some are recent, others are nearly antique. But each reading has been carefully selected to introduce you to one of the core ideas of business strategy. In any academic discipline, new and transformative core ideas or theories are introduced infrequently, maybe once a decade. In many cases, these original ideas are watered down and the essence of the idea is included in a textbook. I have found it much more valuable to invite students to ready the original works in the author’s own words. When you read the original work, nothing is lost in translation or diluted in a summary. Once you have read the articles, you should reflect on what you have learned and share your thoughts in the discussion board for that week. These
responses should be the work of a Master's student near the end of a graduate program of study. Although there is no word minimum or maximum, your response should be long enough to be insightful and short enough to be focused and clear. I also recommend you read and respond to the postings of other students so that you can learn from their insights as well.

**Quizzes:** Each week you will complete a brief quiz based on your reading. Quizzes are normally timed. The quizzes are intended to check to make sure you are reading and comprehending the content. Quizzes are open note and open article, but no internet searches or friend/classmate discussions please as they constitute cheating.

**Case Discussions:** Each week your team is assigned to select an article from the current business news (yahoo.finance, businessweek, google.finance, cnn.money, etc.....). Your team will post (you decide who does what and when) the article and a discussion about how the article relates to what we are learning in class that week. This posting should begin a discussion related to a business and the challenges it is facing. All students are expected to respond to the postings and carry on a dialogue about each post. In each post your team is invited to act as if you are the CEO of that firm and outline the decision processes you would go through to create a stronger competitive advantage and better performance for the company. At the beginning of the semester, your posts will likely be filled with ideas for functional level changes. Toward the end of the semester, you will find that your responses become more strategic as your content knowledge increases. It may be rewarding for you to compare early responses to those you complete late in the semester. I encourage you to watch your knowledge progress and see if there is a marked difference.

**Capsim Simulation:** Each of you must register for the Capsim Simulation as noted earlier. This simulation will be completed as Team. There is some individual work at the beginning to introduce you the the experience, but the actual competition will be as a team. It includes an introduction, practice rounds, and competition rounds. I will evaluate your performance based on the balanced scorecard at the end of the competition round only, the rest is for your learning, although I may give participation grades for completing the introduction and practice rounds.

**Final Exam:** At the end of the semester, your final will be a written exam. It will include responses to brief cases as well as series of open-ended questions. As this is the capstone course for the program, it is anticipated that you will pull information and knowledge from each of the courses in the program to successfully complete this exam. This exam should be the magnum opus of your Master's program experience.
Debate 1: Alibaba in America (7/19)

Dwarfing Amazon and eBay, Alibaba has become the world’s largest ecommerce Internet site. Based in China, the firm has recently turned its eyes to the largest consumer market in the world, the USA. In doing so, it is entering the home country of its major competitors. Will Alibaba succeed?

Order of presentations:

Team 1 – Alibaba will be highly successful in the USA.
Team 2 – Alibaba will not be successful in the USA.

Resources to help you become familiar with the topic
(Your final deliverable will need to go beyond these resources)

Alibaba in America? Don’t bet on it.
https://www.bloomberg.com/view/articles/2017-06-18/alibaba-in-america-don-t-bet-on-it

Why Alibaba In America Is The Growth We Need To Support

10 Reasons Why Alibaba Blows Away Amazon and EBay

Class topics likely relevant to your debate:

- Foreign market entry
- PESTEL
- CAGE
- International trade
- Government intervention in trade
- Culture

(Many other class topics probably apply as well so don’t feel the need to limit yourself to these.)

Finally – Research your topic using only CREDIBLE news sources
Debate 2: Ibis in Cuba (7/19)

Ibis hotels, a subsidiary of French firm Accor Hotels, was encouraged by President Obama’s relaxing of the US’s trade and travel restrictions to with Cuba. Ibis immediately saw an opportunity with American tourists and set out to build a $100M hotel in Havana (304 guestrooms, 9 stories (8 with guestrooms), 34 rooms/floor) in a 50/50 joint venture with the Cuban government. Ibis had spent $10M and just broken ground on the hotel when President Trump unveiled new restrictions on US travel to Cuba. As managers of Ibis, should you continue forward with construction or cut your losses and end the project?

Order of presentations:

Team 3 – Ibis should continue with the hotel construction.
Team 4 – Ibis should stop all construction immediately.

Cuba Ibis hotel (member of Accor Hotels)

Surge of Americans tests limits of Cuba’s tourism industry
http://www.reuters.com/article/us-cuba-usa-tourism-idUSKCN0V40DP

Trump unveils new restrictions on travel, business with Cuba

What Trump’s Cuba policy means for travelers

How much does it cost to build the average hotel? (these are US hotels but the article still should shed some light on hotel construction)
https://www.fixr.com/costs/build-hotel

Class topics likely relevant to your debate:

- Foreign market entry
- PESTEL
- CAGE
- International trade
- Government intervention in trade

(Many other class topics probably apply as well so don’t feel the need to limit yourself to these.)

Finally – Research your topic using only CREDIBLE news sources
Debate 3: FIFA World Cup 2022 - Qatar (7/20)

The country of Qatar will host the FIFA World Cup in 2022. Since receiving that honor, Qatar has experienced several issues that have challenged its ability to host the soccer competition. First, there have been accusations of labor exploitation. Second, because of the extremely hot summers, the games were moved to Nov/Dec instead of their traditional summer timeframe. Then, most recently, five Gulf neighbors imposed sanctions on Qatar and accused it of funding terrorism. Have things gotten to the point that FIFA should relocate the games?

Order of presentations:

Team 5 – FIFA should relocate the games.
Team 6 – FIFA should keep the games in Qatar.

Qatar and World Cup

Qatar World Cup 2022: Tournament's sanctity a bargaining chip for Gulf foes

Qatar World Cup 2022: Abuse of migrant workers continues, says Amnesty International

2022 Qatar World Cup to last 28 days with final to be played on 18 December

FIFA 'in contact' with Qatar over 2022 World Cup
http://www.reuters.com/article/us-gulf-qatar-worldcup-idUSKBN18W1K8

Class topics likely relevant to your debate:

- Government intervention in trade
- PESTEL
- CAGE
- Ethics

(Many other class topics probably apply as well so don’t feel the need to limit yourself to these.)

Finally – Research your topic using only CREDIBLE news sources
Debate 2: Walmart India (7/20)

Walmart has established a presence in India. However, in its current business model, Walmart is not playing the role of retailer. It is playing the role of wholesaler. Walmart took on this role because the Indian government places restrictions on foreign ownership of retail businesses. Will this wholesale model succeed for Walmart, assuming there are no change in Indian law?

Team 7 – Walmart will be successful at this model
Team 8 – Walmart will fail at this model

Resources to become familiar with your topic:

Wholesale model

Carrefour exit from India

Tesco’s joint venture entry

Class topics likely relevant to your debate:
(Many other class topics probably apply as well so don’t feel the need to limit yourself to these.)

PESTEL
CAGE
Government intervention in trade
Culture
Foreign market entry
Talent management

Finally – Research your topic using only CREDIBLE news sources