

BUS 109 – Sections XXX **Competitive and Strategic Analysis - *Online Course***

Instructor: Marlo Raveendran, Ph.D.
Office Hours: via Zoom & by appt.
E-mail: marlor@ucr.edu

TA: TBC
Lecture time: *asynchronous*
Classroom: *online*

School of Business:

Vision

We pursue excellence in all that we do, as our vision is to be an internationally recognized leader in business education and research.

Mission

We create knowledge through impactful research, unlock potential through exceptional educational experiences, and foster success in an innovative and collaborative environment.

Strategy

We pursue excellence in all we do by cultivating our **environment**, **engaging** our community and **empowering** our stakeholders.

Undergraduate Program – Learning Goals

Problem Solving Skills

Students will be able to use a variety of theoretical perspectives to identify and critically evaluate implications of business decisions for organizational stakeholders (e.g., customers, colleagues, employees, stockholders, suppliers, foreign governments, communities, cultures, regulatory agencies) and the natural environment.

Professional Integrity / Ethical Reasoning Skills

Students will be able to recognize ethical issues, demonstrate familiarity with alternative frameworks for ethical reasoning, and discern trade-offs and implications of employing different ethical frames of reference when making business decisions.

Global Context Skills

Students will be conversant with major economic, social, political, and technological trends and conditions influencing foreign investment and development of the global economy and demonstrate an understanding of the cultural, interpersonal and analytical competencies required for engaging in global business activities.

Written Communication Skills

Students will demonstrate proficiency in written communications by creating written documents that are clearly written, with appropriate content and conclusions.

Course topic description

This course introduces students to the fundamental concepts, theories, frameworks, and tools used to formulate and evaluate business strategy. The primary objective is for students to learn how to analyze and think critically about the factors that affect successful performance of individuals and firms in competitive environments. This course provides students with the tools needed to identify strategic problems and make recommendations to individuals and organizations regarding how to improve their business performance.

This course places particular emphasis on problem formulation, critical thinking, and the ability of students to clearly and effectively communicate ideas. Developing these skills requires applications of concepts, theories, tools, and frameworks to real world organizations and phenomena in a “practice” environment.

Course format description

This version of BUS109 has been redesigned from the ground up for an online-only asynchronous format. We will cover four broad topics in this course, each divided up into specific learning objectives. For each weekly set of learning objectives you will work at your own pace: watch videos and read materials that help you understand the theories and frameworks for the module, as well as apply those to current examples. However, you only have a week to complete them. We will interact via online discussion boards where you and the instructor team will post comments throughout the week. At the end of the week the insights from the different discussion boards will be summarized for everyone and your individual reflection paper will be handed in. The weekly discussion board and reflection paper will focus on a business examples. In order to help you apply the theory to the real-world, these examples will be taken from the business press rather than written up cases.

Live office hours via Zoom will be available by appointment to accommodate your schedules.

Learning objective

This course is focused on how to create and sustain advantages in highly competitive business environments. We will focus on analytical frameworks and techniques for evaluating business situations and for developing strategies to improve organizational chances of success. We will take a modern view of strategy that recognizes a firm’s role as not just profit-maximizing but value-maximizing, where value is generated for shareholders, employees, society, and the planet. These topics will be covered across the four modules and all learning objectives.

Specifically, you will learn:

I. Where to compete:

- 1.1 Recognize and describe the elements of an organization’s “environment”, its opportunities and threats.
- 1.2 Evaluate the attractiveness of an industry and the potential for value capture.

II. How to build a sustainable competitive advantage:

- 2.1 Explain the role of business strategy in organizational value creation.
- 2.2 Identify the sources of competitive advantage in the firm’s resources and capabilities.

2.3 Evaluate to what extent a firm's resources and capabilities contribute to a sustainable competitive advantage.

2.4 Evaluate competitive dynamics and their implications for strategic choices.

III. Business strategy:

3.1 Identify different strategies for value creation and their advantages and disadvantages based on the industry context.

3.2 Describe the difference between business and corporate strategy.

IV. Corporate strategy:

4.1 Identify a multi-business organization's portfolio of businesses and potential for value creation at the corporate level.

4.2 Evaluate diversification opportunities for multi-business organizations.

Prerequisite

Course prerequisites can be found in the UCR General Catalog at: <http://registrar.ucr.edu/>

Course Materials

1. **Textbook:** I am using a number of different textbooks so that I can provide the material to you for free via the UCR library. All material will be linked on Canvas.
2. **Cases:** Most business examples will be made available for free via Canvas or the library website. You will need to purchase just one case (for \$4.25) for week 8. This case can be purchased on the HBSP website: **TBC**
3. **Canvas:** Relevant course materials and supplemental readings will be uploaded to Canvas. This is also my primary method of communicating with you, so please ensure that your email address is up to date. You should check Canvas regularly for any new information posted relevant to upcoming sessions.
4. **Slack:** I got our course registered for the Slack pilot to test out whether this might be a good way to answer quick questions by the instructor team as well as by you among yourselves. We will keep the graded discussion board conversations on Canvas (since it integrates with the grading system) but you can use Slack for your chat-based group assignment discussions if you wish. The TAs and I will also be on Slack so if you ping us we can get to your questions quickly.

Please note that strategic management is a field plagued by the same biases as our community at large. You will therefore find that many of the business cases and examples in the textbook and beyond focus on businesses that show very limited diversity. I will do my best to bring diversity into the discussion via the examples and recent news article I select throughout the course.

Grading policy

Final course grades will follow the School of Business-recommended grade distribution for undergraduate core courses. This is intended to produce an equitable distribution that ensures academic rigor and offers accurate feedback to students regarding their academic performance.

Final grades represent how well you perform in the course relative to your classmates. It is my hope, and expectation, that everyone will pass the course.

We will take advantage of the online setting which makes some assessments easier to distribute and grade so that we can split up the overall grade into a greater number of components. There will be weekly quizzes on the prep material a weekly homework, a final take-home exam, weekly discussion board participation, and a group project with two due dates during the quarter. All work will be submitted online. Success criteria for each component will be communicated clearly through rubrics that highlight different levels of performance on each of the criteria for that particular grade component.

Work that is submitted late will not be graded since answers will be available within a few hours of the submission deadline. Please communicate to the instructor *ahead* of time if you encounter difficulties that prevent you from submitting work on time. In exceptional circumstances I will provide makeup work for a missed assignment.

	Grading Element	Percent of Grade
INDIVIDUAL COMPONENTS		
Q	Lectures with interactive quizzes, including questions on the readings (10 weeks, multiple lectures/quizzes per week)	20%
IR	Reflection posts on theory and frameworks (10 total)	20%
DB	Discussion board participation (1 main post, 2 responses weekly)	20%
E	Final take-home exam (case analysis and strategic recommendations)	20%
GROUP COMPONENT		
GP	Group project (2 writeups across the quarter, 10% each)	20%
	Total	100%

Deadlines Overview

1. **Week 1:** *via Canvas:*
 - a. All quizzes due Thursday, XXX, 11:59 pm PT
 - b. Reflection paper due Friday, XXX, 11:59 pm PT
 - c. Discussion board – all posts due Friday, XXX, 11:59 pm PT

2. **Every week (2 – 10),** deadlines are set at the same time/ same day (just the date changes):
 - a. All quizzes due Thursdays 11:59 pm PT
 - b. Reflection paper due Fridays 11:59 pm PT
 - c. Discussion board – all posts due Fridays 11:59 pm PT

3. **Group project:**
 - a. Industry analysis Friday, XXX 11:59 pm PT
 - b. Competitive advantage analysis Friday, XXX 11:59 pm PT

4. **Take-home exam:** Wednesday, XXX 06:00 pm PT

In the interest of keeping you engaged with this course, I have opted for including a large number of assignments. However, this also means that each of these assignments counts for only a small part of your final grade. I have designed the course this way so that you do not fall behind. The continuous deadlines will force you to stay on top of your work for this course and mimic the level of engagement we would expect from you if you were on campus with us.

Weekly interactions

You will interact with me in a number of ways:

- 1) Asynchronously by listening to my video lectures.
- 2) Directly with me via your weekly discussion boards (details below).
- 3) Asynchronously by watching my weekly videos summarizing the take-aways from the week's topic and insights across discussion boards.
- 4) Live in Zoom office hours or via Slack/email, as determined by you.

You will interact with your colleagues in the following ways:

- 1) You will be part of one **~10 student discussion board (fixed membership)** for 10 weeks) to discuss the week's topic, theory, frameworks, and apply it to a current example.
- 2) You will work in a **separate group of about 5 students** to complete two assignments (due on Friday 11:59 pm PT, weeks 4 and 7).
- 3) We will use Slack for other informal interactions and questions.

Grades will be posted throughout the term on Canvas. If you find any problem with your score, you must **inform the instructor within one week from the time this score is posted**. After one week, scores will not be reviewed. In the case of score dispute, the entire exam or assignment will be reviewed, not just the question(s) in dispute. The score could go up, down, or remain the same.

1. Lectures with interactive quizzes & reading quizzes – due weekly by Thursday, 11:59pm PT

Each topic will be covered by a number of recorded lectures. These lectures will (1) introduce the topic, (2) provide in-depth theory and framework discussions, (3) apply the theory/ framework to examples, and (4) discuss the limitation of the theory/ frameworks (note that not all 4 points will be present in every video). These video lectures form the core of the course and will be critical for your understanding of strategic management. I do however assume that you have read the textbook, so it is unlikely to be sufficient to rely solely on the lectures for your theory and framework comprehension. Instead, the video lectures synthesize the material covered in the readings so they should be useful for exam revision. To help you check your own comprehension of the material, the video will have embedded questions. You can repeat the video as many times as you like before the weekly deadline to get a better score. You are responsible for ensuring that the quiz score is recorded and saved after you submit your answers. Please leave enough time before the deadline in case you encounter any technical difficulties.

In addition to the video lectures, there will be Canvas based quizzes that include questions for assigned readings and TED talks to ensure that you study the material carefully and to provide you the opportunity to check your understanding. You can retake these reading quizzes as many times as you like.

2. Reflection paper – due weekly by **Friday, 11:59pm PT**

Each week, a current news article will be posted that relates to the topic. We will use these simple articles to discuss and apply the theory/framework to. You will write short answers to basic comprehension questions each week, that ask you to apply the theory/ framework to the article. Submissions will be graded on a 4-point scale (per question), with 4 indicating outstanding analysis, 3 complete analyses, 2 adequate analyses, and 1 incomplete analyses; 0 points will be given for answers that miss the point of the question or are not handed in.

3. Discussion board participation – due weekly by **Friday, 11:59pm PT**

I will assign each of you to a discussion board at the beginning of the course. The boards will have a fixed membership for the entire quarter of around 10 students per board. Each week we will use the same handout as we use for the reflection post (business news article or case) for you to read and analyze using the frameworks and theories we cover in the course. While the individual reflection paper focuses on basic comprehension, we will use the same business example to ask more opinion-based and analytical questions.

Your discussion board contributions will be graded out of 3 points each week. Note that **1 main, original post and 2 responses to your colleagues' posts is the minimum requirement** – i.e. this is the **quantity** metric. You will get 1 point for each of those posts.

The remaining 3 points will be allocated based on your **main post's quality**. Your contribution starts with suggesting solutions/answers to questions I post on the board. Note that your opinion matters in strategy! Your background and perspective are useful and giving us your own, often diverging point of view on a question is truly valuable. All posts require opinions and deeper thinking to make an original contribution to the discussion. A full-3-point main post answers the question, applies appropriate theory and/ OR voices your opinion with well-developed logic/arguments. In order to get **any** points for your main post it has to be **original** – i.e. not something somebody else already posted on your discussion board. So please make sure you **read** the ongoing discussion **before you prepare and post** your own.

In your responses to others, I expect you to maintain a respectful tone and to assume the best in other people's intentions. Keep in mind that you are enrolled in a deeply diverse program – we pride ourselves in attracting students from across the globe. This, however, also means that we have different English language proficiencies contributing to the discussion. If you feel someone is being rude or curt, pause and re-read it to see whether it might just lack the cultural undertones *you* would have used.

The TA and I will be actively engaged in each of the discussion boards, mainly reading posts each day and assessing contributions, and sometimes adding follow up questions to get you to think more deeply about the topics. At the start of the course I will be more actively “present”; I will reduce my posts as the course progresses and you need less guidance. The TA and I will not comment extensively during the week's discussion so that we do not take away points you wanted to raise. Instead, I will provide a summary video of the week's topic that will include my take on the questions and a synthesis of the insights generated across all discussion boards.

4. Group project – due by Friday 11:59pm PT, in weeks 4 and 7 only

Business success requires good communication and teamwork skills. This course will prepare you for a successful business career by providing an opportunity to work on course assignments with a group. The group assignments will directly apply the learnt material to real-world examples. Students will complete two group assignments in the same group of 5 randomly assigned students. You will apply the theory across multiple weeks to a firm based on a recent news article (assigned and chosen by the instructor). Each submission should be a 2-page answer to the questions posted. Two pages is VERY SHORT. You will find it difficult to reduce the information and ideas you have gathered into just two pages. That is done deliberately. Your boss will not have the patience to read more than that (usually no more than a paragraph), so practice to synthesize the ideas and information you have gathered to the most interesting and important points.

5. Final Take-Home Exam – due by Wednesday, XXX, 06:00pm PT

The final exam will be a two-page case analysis in which you apply the frameworks and analyses to a new business case. This exam will be graded out of 20 points: 10 for a complete external analysis, 10 for a complete internal analysis. More details will be posted on Canvas.

Integrity statement:

At the University of California, Riverside honesty and integrity are fundamental values that guide and inform us as individuals and as a community. The academic culture requires that each student take responsibility for learning and for producing work that reflect their intellectual potential, curiosity, and capability. Students must represent themselves truthfully, claim only work that is their own, acknowledge their use of others' words, research results, and ideas, using the methods accepted by the appropriate academic disciplines and engage honestly in all academic assignments. Misunderstanding of the appropriate academic conduct will not be accepted as an excuse for academic misconduct. If a student is in doubt about appropriate academic conduct in a particular situation, he or she should consult with the instructor in the course to avoid the serious charge of academic misconduct.

To ensure the highest standard of academic integrity, all students should be familiar with the guidelines posted at: <https://conduct.ucr.edu/policies/academic-integrity-policies-and-procedures>

Course Schedule –Weekly class preparation

Note: IR=Individual Reflection paper, DB=Discussion Board; all course materials linked or available on Canvas

Week	Topic	Learning Objective	Building foundations
INTRODUCTION			
1	Strategy Basics & Foundations of Strategic Thinking.	Get a sense what business strategy is, how to identify a firm's strategy, and how your values influence your strategy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Video lectures, see Canvas- Syllabus- TED talk 1.1- E-book Chapter 1- Additional news article for IR + DB Optional: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Besanko (intro to Economics for Strategy)- E-book Chapter 2
I. WHERE TO COMPETE			
2	The External Environment: Industry analysis, Five Forces Analysis, PESTEL	Recognize and describe the elements of an organization's "environment", its opportunities and threats. (1.1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Video lectures, see Canvas- E-book Chapter 4- Additional news article for IR + DB
3		Evaluate the attractiveness of an industry and the potential for value capture. (1.2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Video lectures, see Canvas- TED talk 3.1- TED talk 3.2- Rothaermel: Chapter 3- Additional news article for IR + DB
II. HOW TO BUILD A SUSTAINABLE COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE			
4	Sources of Competitive Advantage: value creation & capture, resources & capabilities.	Explain the role of business strategy in organizational value creation. (2.1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Video lectures, see Canvas- Grant & Jordan, Chapter 3- TED talk 4.1- Additional news article for IR + DB
5		Evaluate to what extent a firm's resources & capabilities contribute to a sustainable competitive advantage. (2.3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Video lectures, see Canvas- E-book Chapter 5- TED talk 5.1- Additional news article for IR + DB
III. BUSINESS STRATEGY			
6	Generic Strategies: Cost advantage	Identify different strategies for value creation and their advantages and disadvantages based on the industry context. (3.1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Video lectures, see Canvas- Rothaermel Chapter 6: p. 162-168 & 172-178- Additional news article for IR + DB
7	Generic Strategies: Differentiation advantage	Identify different strategies for value creation and their advantages and disadvantages based on the industry context. (3.1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Video lectures, see Canvas- Rothaermel Chapter 6: p. 168-171 & 178-181- TED talk 7.1- TED talk 7.2- Additional news article for IR + DB
8	Innovation: Value creation advantage	Identify different strategies for value creation and their advantages and disadvantages based on the industry context. (3.1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Video lectures, see Canvas- Rothaermel Chapter 6: pp. 181-191- TED talk 8.1- E-book Chapter 6- Additional news article for IR + DB Optional: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- E-book Chapter 7
IV. CORPORATE STRATEGY			
9	Business vs. Corporate Strategy, diversification	Describe the difference between business and corporate strategy. (3.2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Video lectures, see Canvas- Grant & Jordan, Chapter 7, pp. 307-324- Additional news article for IR + DB
10	Diversification strategies	Evaluate diversification opportunities for multi-business organizations. (4.2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Video lectures, see Canvas- Grant & Jordan, Chapter 7, pp. 324-355- TED talk 10.1- Additional news article for IR + DB Optional: Puranam & Vanneste, 2009