

NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY
College of Business Administration

MGT 1450: Business Policy

Winter 2003, Sections 1 and 2: each section meets M and W a.m. in Dodge 230

Professor: Andrew Watson, Hayden Hall 319H

Office Hours: M 12:30-1:30p.m., Tu 9.30-10.30a.m, and by appointment

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It may be necessary to make changes to the syllabus. It is my responsibility to let you know what they are, and yours to keep track of them (even if you are absent from a class meeting in which they are announced). I will announce such changes via the online syllabus, as well as in class meetings.

Northeastern University's Academic Honesty and Integrity policy applies to this course, and will be enforced if necessary.

Overview and Objectives

Business Policy (which is better described as Strategic Management) is a "big picture" course as well as a capstone course. One way of introducing it is by contrast with most other courses within business schools. Whereas these other courses, explicitly or implicitly, present the perspective of a specific function (e.g., marketing, finance), this course presents a general management perspective.

On successful completion of this capstone course, you will be able to:

- Describe the key concepts of business policy/strategic management.
- Use these concepts, together with concepts from functionally specialized courses, to analyze problems faced by general managers.
- Clearly present your analysis, verbally and in writing.

Books

Harrison, J. S, & St. John, C. H. 2002. *Foundations in strategic management*. 2nd edition. South-Western. Available from the campus bookstore, and on reserve at the Snell library.

Custom case book. Available from the campus bookstore, and on reserve at the Snell library. The title is *Management*. It is different from the case books used by most other professors here, so you need to use the one with my name, not one with anyone else's.

Capstone Team Member Guide. Available from the Teaching Assistants. Each *student* (not just each group) must register for the Capstone simulation, and pay to do so.

Schedule

I freely admit that this schedule is very crowded. This arises from our having only 17 meetings, rather than the 20 meetings usual in a 10-week quarter. The “first week” of the quarter comprises just one day: a Friday, and we do not meet on Fridays. We meet on Mondays and Wednesdays, and one of the Mondays is the holiday in honor of Martin Luther King Jr.

Date	Due from you	In class
M Jan 6		Introduction to the course and to the simulation The strategic management process (chapter 1 of <i>Foundations</i>)
W Jan 8	Prepare to discuss environment in simulation and in “real world”	External environment (ch. 2). Discuss what’s going on in the environment of business currently. Discuss also the environment presented by the simulation.
M Jan 13	Read Capstone Guide	Simulation workshop
W Jan 15	Last day for checking in Simulation practice round 1 (P1)	Internal “environment,” mission, etc. (ch. 3)
M Jan 20		No class: university closed for holiday
W Jan 22	Prepare for discussions of case and simulation	NextCard case (on web) Discuss simulation after P1 (bring Courier)
M Jan 27	P2	Business strategy (ch. 4)
W Jan 29	<i>MicroTextBook sample chapter</i> Prepare for discussion of simulation	Any one of the first four chapters (which correspond to the first four chapters of <i>Foundations</i>) Discuss simulation after P2 (bring Courier)

Date	Due from you	In class
M Feb 3	Simulation round 1 (Y1) Skim AOL	Corporate strategy (ch. 5) AOL Time Warner reading (skim it before class)
W Feb 5	Prepare for discussions of case and simulation	Avid case Discuss simulation after Y1 (bring Courier)
(F Feb 7)	Y2	No class, but simulation decisions due
M Feb 10	<i>Annual report sheet</i> <i>Reflection 1</i>	Corporate governance Strategic control and restructuring (ch. 7)
W Feb 12	Prepare for discussion of case Y3	PFS case
M Feb 17	Y4	International strategy (ch. 8)
W Feb 19	<i>Case analysis</i>	Mondavi case
(F Feb 21)	Y5	No class, but simulation decisions due
M Feb 24	Prepare for discussion of case	Moss Adams case Strategy implementation (ch. 6)
W Feb 26	<i>MicroTextBook</i> Y6	Course summary
M Mar 3	Presentations	Presentations from firms in first industry
W Mar 5	<i>Annual report</i> (for Y6, from all firms) Presentations	Presentations from firms in second industry
(M Mar 10)	<i>Reflection 2</i> due by noon	No class (and no final exam either)

Assignments

I've put written assignments in *italics* in the schedule above. Note, however, that not all assignments are written.

Assignment	%age of grade
Simulation (the only group assignment)	33
Class participation	20
Written case analysis	20
MicroTextBook	20
Short written assignments	7

There are actually multiple assignments that will influence your grade for the **simulation**, including your annual report for year 6, and your presentation after year 6. I hope to be able to give each student the same simulation grade as the other group members, but will make adjustments to individual grades if I consider it appropriate.

Upload your decisions (P1, P2, Y1, Y2, etc.) to the Capstone web site *before noon* on the days specified in the schedule. You will be able to download the results from the same site within an hour (unless the teaching assistants encounter technical difficulties in processing the decisions).

There is more to **class participation** than mere attendance. Punctuality, preparation, and, of course, active participation are also vital. So is turning off mobile phones and similar devices during class.

Note that preparation is required for almost every class meeting. In particular, when I assign a case, I expect to be able to call upon any student with questions such as the following. What are the main issues in this case? Who are the key decision-makers? What are the key strengths of the organization? What are the key threats facing the organization? What alternatives are available to the organization? Which of these would you recommend, and why? How should your recommendation be implemented? (This is a list of rather general sample questions; the list would differ from case to case.)

The **written case analysis** should be no more than four double-spaced pages, plus exhibits (plus a cover page if you use a separate one. Hence an analysis with a cover page, four pages of double-spaced text, and two pages of exhibits would comprise seven pages in all). As well as being concise, it should be clear and thoughtful. I suggest that you structure your analysis as follows: Introduction; SWOT analysis; discussion of alternatives; recommendation; suggestions for implementation.

The **micro-textbook** is a very concise strategy textbook. It will cover: introduction to strategy; external analysis; internal analysis; business strategy; corporate strategy; and international strategy. It will include examples. We'll discuss in class what we should be looking for in examples, and in other aspects of the paper.

There are the following five **short written assignments**. I will mark each with a check, check-plus, or check-minus (I hope I do not have to resort to a double-minus or worse). If

you receive a check for each of the short assignments, I'll record a B+ for this portion of your grade. Check-plusses will bring your grade towards an A, check-minuses will take it in the opposite direction. Short assignments (3) and (5) will weigh more heavily than will the others. I will provide less feedback on these assignments than on the longer written assignments.

(1) Checking in. Before the 4th class meeting, you should have checked in by: registering for the section (if you can't do this, you probably shouldn't bother with the rest of the things on this list); signing in to the Blackboard site for your section; checking into the Capstone site for your industry and firm; making sure that I have a photograph of you; making sure that I have a card for you.

(2) Sample micro-textbook chapter.

(3) AR sheet. Find an organization's annual report. The report should include both "public relations" and financials. Download and complete the sheet from the Blackboard site.

(4) Reflection 1. This is a short memo to me, comprising two parts. First, comment on class discussions so far. How have you contributed? How many classes have you missed, and why? Have you been punctual?

Second, comment on the simulation so far. What are your impressions of the simulation as a means of learning strategy? What is your role within your group? How well, or otherwise, is the group working together? In order to allow you to be frank about this last question, I will keep reflections confidential.

(5) Reflection 2. This is also confidential. You may submit it by email. You should provide an update to your first reflection.

You should also comment on your group's presentation, with emphasis on your contribution to it. In order to do this, you will need to watch the video tape of the presentation, which will be on audio-visual reserve at the Snell Library. You may if you wish include reflections on other aspects of the course.

Web Sites

We will use two web sites for this course: one for the syllabus, and one for the simulation. You (as an individual) must register at each of the two sites.

The **web syllabus** is a Blackboard site. It is the home site for this course, and provides links to other relevant sites and pages. You can access it via:
<http://blackboard.neu.edu> (note the lack of “www” in this URL).

You should create one account for yourself, not one per course. So if you already have a Blackboard account, you don't need to create another one for this course.

If you do need to create one, do so by choosing Create Account and setting your account name to:

yourlastname.yourfirstinitial

For example, if I were a student, I would create for myself the account name: watson.a

Once you have a Blackboard account, you can enroll in this course (and in any other courses you are taking for which the professor is using Blackboard). Browse the courses and select this one; to be more specific, select the appropriate section of MGT 1450.

You can access the **simulation web site** via www.capsim.com. Register there once you have been assigned an industry number and a firm name. You will use this site to upload your decisions (prices, production, etc.), and to download the outcomes of those decisions.

There is a cost to registration at Capstone. It is in part because of this cost that I have selected a textbook (Foundations) that is smaller and less expensive than most textbooks in Strategy (or in other fields).

I'll leave further details of the simulation and its web site for the teaching assistants to explain, since they will be running the simulation.