

NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

College of Business Administration

MGT U501: Strategy in Action

Spring 2006, Tue and Fri

Dodge 130: Section 1 meets at 8:00 a.m., and section 4 meets at 9:50 a.m.

Professor: Andrew Watson, Hayden 319H

Office Hours: Tue 1-2p.m., Wed 9:30-10:30 a.m., or 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 Blackboard, 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

Strategy in Action 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 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

Ireland, R.D., Hoskisson, R.E., & Hitt, M.A. 2006. *Understanding Business Strategy: Concepts*. Thompson. Available from the campus bookstore, and on reserve at the Snell library. Note that this is not the "concepts and cases" version that some other professors are using.

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

Various handouts, to be distributed as we go along. One of these is the Participant's Guide for the Glo-Bus management simulation. Each *student* (not just each group) must register for the simulation, and pay to do so.

Schedule

Date	Due from you	In class
Tue Jan 10		Introduction to course Introduction to Glo-Bus (G-B) simulation
Fri Jan 13	Skim G-B Participant's Guide	Foundations of strategy (Chapter 1)
Tue Jan 17	Prepare for case discussion	EasyCar Start to form groups for G-B
Fri Jan 20		Growth strategies (handout)
(Mon Jan 23)	Register for simulation Introduce self on Blackboard	No class
Tue Jan 24	Read G-B Guide	G-B workshop in Dodge 219
Fri Jan 27	G-B deadline at noon: - Practice decision 1 (year 6, group) - Quiz 1 (individual)	No class
Tue Jan 31	G-B printout, not for handin, but: prepare to discuss; make sure that your group has hardcopy	Discuss practice decision 1 External analysis (Ch. 3)
Fri Feb 3	G-B at noon: practice decision 2	Internal analysis (Ch. 4) Leadership: vision, TMT, resources (Ch. 2, first half) Test preparation exercise
Tue Feb 7	Prepare for case discussion G-B printout, as above	Case to be announced Discuss practice decision 2
Fri Feb 10		Test 1

You can think of the course in three thirds, plus an endgame. In the first third, we cover chapters 1, 3, and 4, and the first half of chapter 2 of the textbook. This material introduces strategy and analysis. In the second third, we cover strategy formulation at three levels: business (ch. 5), corporate (ch. 6, multiproduct strategies), and international (ch. 8, competing across borders). The remaining material comprises the last third.

We have a test at the end of each third of the course. Then we have my favorite part of the course: your presentations!

Date	Due from you	In class
Tue Feb 14	G-B at noon: decision 1	Business strategy (Ch. 5) Video or exercise
Fri Feb 17	Prepare for case discussion G-B printout, as above	Krispy Kreme Discuss decision 1
Tue Feb 21	G-B at noon: decision 2 E-mail me your mini-reflection	Corporate strategy (Ch. 6) Video or exercise
Fri Feb 24	Case writeup G-B printout, as above	Adidas Discuss decision 2
Tue Feb 28	G-B at noon: decision 3	International strategy (Ch. 8) Video or exercise
Fri Mar 3		Test 2
(Tue Mar 7)	No class: Spring break	
(Fri Mar 10)	No class: Spring break	

Date	Due from you	In class
Tue Mar 14	Prepare for case discussion G-B at noon: decision 4 (first year in which you can bid for special orders)	Moss Adams Strategic entrepreneurship (Ch. 10)
Fri Mar 17	Prepare for case discussion	Kikoman Leadership: entrepreneurial culture, ethics, controls (Ch. 2, second half) Corporate governance (handout)
Tue Mar 21	G-B annual reports for year 9 (decision 4) due in or before class from each group G-B at noon: decision 5	M&A (Ch. 7) Video or exercise
Fri Mar 24	Prepare for case discussion Skim annual reports G-B at noon: decision 6	Chasen mini-case (handout) Discuss annual reports Alliances (Ch. 9)
Tue Mar 28	Prepare for case discussion	NextCard
Fri Mar 31	Prepare for case discussion G-B at noon: decision 7, no special order bidding	PFS: identifying the players (see Blackboard discussion forum) Course summary
Tue Apr 4	Prepare for case discussion	PFS: bidding to win (see Blackboard)
Fri Apr 7	Test 3	
Tue Apr 11	G-B company presentations, in ascending order of G-B company score. (Note that the grade you get for the simulation depends on more than your company score. See below for details.)	
Fri Apr 14		
Tue Apr 18		
(Mon Apr 24)	Email me your final reflection	No class. This date is in finals week, but there is no final.

Assignments

Assignment	%age of grade
Simulation (the only group assignment)	30
Class participation	20
Written case analysis	25
Tests	25

Your grade for the **simulation** will depend mainly on your group's grade. Your group's grade in turn will depend on three main factors: the score computed by the simulation itself; your presentation; and your annual report. You may if you wish add an extra factor, by submitting extra work. For example, you might issue press releases. They would of course be timely and visible to your competitors. To expand the example, a press release relating to your results for decision 2 would be posted on Blackboard prior to the decision 3 deadline.

Your simulation grade also depends on your individual contribution to your group. I can assess this contribution via the quizzes, peer evaluations, reflections, and other indicators. If my assessment is sufficiently negative, your simulation grade will be lower than your group's and thus lower than the simulation grade of other group members.

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.)

There will be opportunities to participate in the class on-line, in Blackboard discussions, as well as in the classroom.

The two reflections you will email me (see above for specific dates) count towards your class participation grade; or it might be more accurate to say that failure to send them will count against your grade. In each reflection email, you should comment on:

- Your class participation.
- Your job in your simulation group: job title, and anything else you want to say about it.
- The division of work within your simulation group. How is work divided? Is each member doing her or his job?

- Your part of your group's simulation presentation (for the end-of-semester reflection only). In order to do this, you will need to watch the video of the presentation. If you are not among the presenters, you'll still need to watch the video, because in this case you should comment on the presentation as a whole.

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.

Each of the three **tests** will comprise a mix of multiple-choice and short-answer questions. We will discuss sample questions before the first test.

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).

Make sure that you enroll in the appropriate section of MGT U501.

You can access the **simulation web site** via www.glo-bus.com. Register there once you have been assigned a registration code. You will use this site to upload your decisions (prices, production, etc.), and to download the outcomes of those decisions. There is a *per student* cost to registration at Glo-Bus.