

## *Course Syllabus*

Department of Management; California State University, Northridge  
(January 13, 2009 Version)

- Course:** MGT 693: Seminar in Strategic Management; 2009 Spring  
12576: 7pm – 9:45pm Tuesday  
JH 1230
- Professor:** Mingfang Li, Ph.D.
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- Phone:** (818) 677-2421 (Office) or (818) 677-2457 (Dept)
- email:** [mli@csun.edu](mailto:mli@csun.edu); **Add “693” to the email subject line please!**
- Office Hours:** 10:00am-11:00am & 2:00pm-3:30pm R; 9:50pm-10:20pm T, and also by appointment
- Textbooks: (Required)**
- Grant, Robert M. (2007). *Contemporary Strategy Analysis*. 6th Edition. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
  - HBS Cases and Readings Pack (See the URL below):  
<http://harvardbusinessonline.hbsp.harvard.edu/relay.jhtml?name=cp&c=c27948>
- Web:** <http://www.csun.edu/~mli/>
- Prerequisites:** Completing major portions of the MBA curriculum

**Course Descriptions:** An integrative seminar dealing with broad company strategy issues via the case method. There will be definition and analysis of internal and external factors affecting the development of company objectives and strategies. The course stresses the interrelationships among major functional areas and the pervasive adjustments that may result from changes in strategy. Students are expected to apply the analytical tools obtained from functional areas as well as this course to solve organization-wide problems. Emphasis is placed on case study methodology.

### **Course Activities:**

#### A. *Case Write Up:* (20%, and 30%)

Students will prepare one major case write up twice – the second time the emphasis will be placed on enhancing the weaknesses identified in the first case write up attempt, and the overall improvement. The main body of the written case analysis may be no more than twenty 8.5x11 pages, single-sided, double-spaced throughout, 12-point size Times Roman or Arial font, 1-inch margins on all four edges of the page and fonts must not be ‘condensed’ in any way. In addition, **value-added** appendices (such as tables, charts, diagrams, and financial ratio analyses) should be created, and attached on additional page(s).

We will utilize cases 3 and 5 as the major cases to be used for your case write-up. Your first write up should be turned in on the day the case is to be discussed, and the final write up at the date indicated on the syllabus.

All written case analyses must be emailed to me at [mli@csun.edu](mailto:mli@csun.edu) by the start of the class period on the date noted in the “timetable” portion of this syllabus. After that time, analyses will not be accepted unless we have made prior arrangements. All written analyses that you turn in for grading should identify you only by your ID number, which I will assign; your name should

not appear on your document. **Your email should contain one document as an attachment in pdf format.** An excellent report would be described as such (the write-up will be evaluated against this benchmark):

- 1. Internal Analysis:** Identifies, analyzes, and evaluates the mission, major objectives, current strategies (especially corporate-level and business/competitive-level), organization performance, and the various functional areas (including functional strategies, where significant) as well as organizational structure and management systems.
- 2. Analysis of the External Environment:** Analyzes and evaluates relevant elements of the general and competitive environments, and their implications for the organization and its strategies.
- 3. Integration of Major Strategic Issues:** Integrates the major findings in the analysis. Clearly identifies and details the critical issues and problems that must be addressed by management, and for which recommendations will be made. Clearly states and describes the critical issues (as issues, rather than as actions). Shows clearly – here and/or in earlier sections – why these particular issues were selected as the most “critical” ones. Includes a comprehensive SWOT table (usually as an appendix, but well-integrated into the text).
- 4. Available Alternative Strategies:** Presents and evaluates alternative strategies, including major strategic options open to the organization, that can be considered reasonable in the context of this analysis. Provides a logical and balanced analysis of the alternatives. Distinguishes between strategic alternatives and implementation issues.
- 5. Recommendations & Implementation Plan:** Proposes specific recommendations and a plan for implementation. Gives recommendations for corporate-level strategy, and competitive strategies as appropriate in the analysis, and ensures that all the critical issues identified are addressed adequately by the recommendations. Clearly presents the rationale for choosing which strategy or strategies are in fact recommended in the report. Demonstrates an in-depth understanding of what the recommendations mean. Anticipates major implementation issues and barriers, then identifies a credible series of actions to deal with them. Considers both managerial issues (such as top management, structure, and culture related matters) and operational matters related to implementation.
- 6. Report:** This is a competent business report from the writer, as a consultant, to the CEO of the client organization. It communicates clearly and is appropriately targeted at the CEO level. The report is well organized, is internally consistent, and there is a logical flow of analysis. It is well written, and contains proper grammar, spelling, word usage, and punctuation. It makes effective use of multi-level headings (clearly formatted to show the hierarchy) and data displays.
- 7. Executive Summary:** Placed as the first page after the title page, the Executive Summary should be a two page double spaced separate element of your strategic analysis and recommendation highlighting the major substantive points of your paper.

**B. Group Activities: (20%)**

Two to three students should form a team to research business periodicals such as Harvard Business Review, Sloan Management Review and California Management Review to identify a set of articles (one each) relevant to a particular topic we discussed in class, and make an integrated presentation of those articles, critique them, and link them to our course materials.

The instructor will evaluate both individual presentation quality and team integration efforts. The purpose of this project is to develop your ability to continue educate yourselves with the latest thinking in theories that are useful to guide management practices.

**D. Participation: (30%)**

Class participation will count heavily in the evaluation of your performance in this course. Attendance and preparation prior to each class meeting are very important. You should have the facts of the case, your analysis of critical issues, and your recommendations prepared before you come to class. Be ready to present them if called upon and be willing to volunteer your analysis and opinion if not called upon. All students will be graded on participation for every class. When analyzing a case, the instructor's role is to act as a discussion facilitator, not as a lecturer. The students will perform the analyses and critique the cases. Be prepared to contribute in every class session. A student who is not prepared for a particular class meeting is responsible for informing the professor in advance.

Quality is important consideration when evaluating your performance. High quality participation should include: *excellent preparation*: as reflected in insightful analyses of relevant materials, and integration of course topics and earlier discussions; *contribution to class discussion*: as reflected in application of theoretical materials, well-focused discourse, and good input into cooperative argument building; and *on-going and consistently active involvement*.

**Grading**

The final letter grade assigned to each student will be based on the scheme below. The total achievable points are 100. The instructor does not make any adjustment.

|        |    |          |    |
|--------|----|----------|----|
| 94-100 | A  | 90-94    | A- |
| 87-90  | B+ | 84-87    | B  |
| 80-84  | B- | 77-80    | C+ |
| 74-77  | C  | 70-74    | C- |
| 67-70  | D+ | 64-67    | D  |
|        |    | 60-64    | D- |
|        |    | Below 60 | F  |

**Attendance**

Attendance is required since it is essential for understanding the course materials, conducting discussions, and completing projects. A student who misses more than two class meetings cannot receive a passing grade for the course; absence for a significant portion of a class meeting will be counted as one absence. Attendance does affect the "class participation" portion of the grade.

**Note-taking**

Good note-taking facilitates effective learning. I require that you take complete notes when previewing course materials, preparing for discussions and attending classes. I will randomly

check student notes from time to time. Such notes may be hard copy based or electronic. I highly recommend the Cornell note-taking system (see the following site for further information: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cornell\\_Notes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cornell_Notes)).

### Other Issues

1. The College of Business and Economics at California State University, Northridge prepares students to be ethical decision makers. The college maintains high standards of ethical conduct that students are expected to maintain throughout their academic and professional careers. Students in the College of Business and Economics have identified the values of respect, honesty, integrity, commitment, and responsibility as their guiding principles. Please visit <http://www.csun.edu/busecon/students.html> for a detailed description of these core values.
2. This syllabus is the basic guideline for various activities related to this class. Please read it carefully, and refer to it as we proceed. (We may also adjust the syllabus after consultation. This is necessary in order to create an environment conducive to effective learning.)
3. Please talk to me **as soon as possible** if you have any suggestions, questions, problems and concerns.
4. All cases of academic dishonesty will be dealt with strictly following university policies. (All written case analyses and briefs must be prepared independently, and without consulting with previous write-ups and outside sources).
5. I will share a variety of electronic files throughout the semester. Please ensure you have necessary facilities to process such files (they may include Word documents, Excel spreadsheets, Powerpoint presentations, and pdf files). For pdf files, please download the Adobe Reader 6.0 or above.
6. Students are required to use the CSUN account for receiving email from and sending email to me.
7. Please note I will not discuss nor communicate any final grade related inquires via email.
8. All students are required to use the CSUN email facility to send and receive email communications. You may wish to forward your CSUN email to your private ISP but I will only receive and respond to your CSUN account to ensure trouble-free email communications.
9. I plan to utilize WebCT for a variety of course exchange activities. Please formalize yourself with the system.

| <b>Time Table (Subject to Changes)</b> |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <b>Week</b>                            | <b>Conceptual Materials</b>   | <b>Cases and Assignments</b>  |
| 1. 1/20                                | 1. the Concept of Strategy<br>Porter: What is Strategy  | Course introduction<br>Student self introduction<br>Q&A                                 |
| 2. 1/27                                | 2. Goals, Values and Performance<br>Porter and Kramer: Strategy and Society                               | Discussing the overall model<br>of Strategic Management                                 |
| 3. 2/3                                 | 3. Analyzing the Industry Environment<br>Case Analysis and Case Writing (Review the<br>syllabus synopsis) | Preview Chapters 5, 13-15<br>Mission, Values and Goals<br>Examples                      |
| 4. 2/10                                | 4. Intra-Industry Analysis  | 1. Ducati   |
| 5. 2/17                                | 5. Analyzing Resources and Capabilities<br>6. Organizational Structures and Systems                       | 2. Harley Davidson<br>Basic notion of<br>implementation                                 |
| 6. 2/24                                | 7. Competitive Advantage<br>8. Cost Advantage and<br>9. Differentiation Advantage                         | 3. Wal-Mart Stores 2003<br>How to implementing a<br>business strategy                   |
| 7. 3/3                                 | 15. Diversification Strategy<br>16. Managing Multibusiness Firms  | 4. Academic Barilla<br>Considerations for<br>implementation a<br>multibusiness strategy |
| 8. 3/10                                | 14. Strategies of Multinational Businesses  | 5. GE's Growth Strategy<br>Considerations for<br>management global firms                |
| 9. 3/17                                | 13. Vertical Integration Strategies   | Considerations for managing<br>vertical scope   |
| 10. 3/24                               | Summary and Recap of Course Materials So Far  | Strategy formulation and<br>implementation consideration                                |
| 3/30                                   | <b>No Class on Tuesday 3/31 (Official Holiday)</b>  | <b>First Case Rewrite Due</b>   |
| 11. 4/2                                | 10. Industry Evolution and Strategic Change   | Review of Case Rewrites   |
| 12. 4/14                               | 17. Current Trends in Strategic Management  | <b>Second Case Rewrite Due</b>  |
| 13. 4/21                               | 11. Technological Industries and Innovation   | 6. Apple Computers<br><b>Group Activity Report</b>                                      |
| 14. 4/28                               | 12. Mature Industries   |   |
| 15. 5/5                                |   | Course Recap and Feedback   |