

MBA 643
Integrative Strategic Management (3 hrs)
Western Carolina University
Syllabus, 20xx

Meeting Room: 0xx
Meeting Time: 6:00—8:50pm, M
Phone (UNCA): 828-251-6642

Instructor's Office Hours:
MW:

Instructor Information:
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Course Description and Prerequisites

This course will make the student aware of how business strategy is developed and executed to deliver organizational performance. Students will gain awareness that the context within which economic exchange occurs is changing at a rapid pace, limiting the value that traditional models of strategic management provide, and requiring a constant search for newer, more relevant models. Thus, the course provides an introduction and review of traditional basic strategy, but the chief intent of this course is to explore the frontiers of current knowledge and induce students to think in new, more holistic ways about managing organizations to support long-term effectiveness. Among the topics covered will be an examination of the global context in which businesses compete, and evidence that in today's global economy, business success increasingly requires a model of management that extends beyond the boundaries of the individual organization, and the course will include consideration of the emergence of a meta-organizational perspective on strategic leadership.

Prerequisite: Completion of 24 hours of MBA core courses.

Course Learning Objectives

- Be able to identify, describe and analyze executive-level managerial problems involved in establishing and maintaining an organization, including issues involving ethical, legal, cross-cultural and multinational concerns.
- Be able to categorize, define and discriminate among the types of strategic issues and problems faced by executive-level managers, with special emphasis on the interdisciplinary nature of these problems.
- Be able to integrate the ideas and concepts taught in the other MBA core courses into a holistic perspective, and describe this perspective in both written and verbal forms.
- Be able to demonstrate the value of knowledge from the MBA core courses in fashioning effective business plans.
- Be able to understand and describe new approaches to strategic problem solving, along with the reasons for and value of such changes.

Class Sessions

We start life with a profound drive to learn. We can come together to learn with a sense of joy and adventure. You are asked to join in a journey to learn about strategic thinking in the management of organizations. The course will be both more fun and more useful if everyone will actively participate in discussions and activities. You can only do this if you come to class prepared by having read the assignments and by having considered the

material in light of your experiences and beliefs. This course should represent an initial step in a journey of life-long learning in this field.

Required Texts

de Kluyver, Cornelius A. and Pearce, John A. II. **Strategy: A View From the Top 4th Ed.** (Boston: Prentice Hall, 2012). ISBN 978-0-13-214562-6.

Senge, Peter; Kleiner, Art; Roberts, Charlotte; Ross, Richard; Roth, George; and Smith, Bryan. **The Dance of Change: The Challenges to Sustaining Momentum in Learning Organizations** (New York: Currency Doubleday, 1999). ISBN: 0-385-493223.

Carter, Louis; Ulrich, David and Goldsmith, Marshall. **Best Practices in Leadership Development and Organization Change: How the Best Companies Ensure Meaningful Change and Sustainable Leadership** (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2011). ISBN: 978-0-7879-7625-5.

Friend, Graham and Zehle, Stefan. **Guide to Business Planning (2nd Ed.)** (London: The Economist, 2009). ISBN: 978-1-84668-122-6.

Cook, Claire K. **Line by Line: How to Edit Your Own Writing.** (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1986). ISBN: 0395393914.

Supplemental Reading

Additional readings, assigned in class, will serve to provide additional coverage of lecture topics.

Grading Procedures

Each student is expected to read the material for each class session, attend and be prepared to actively participate in lecture discussions.

Constituents of your grade:

Participation – a central requirement for successful completion of the course. I expect that each of you will attend class and actively contribute to class discussions.	Required
Brief introduction.	Required
First Paper	8%
Second through sixth papers	14% each
Written business plan (including a proposal and required progress reports).	22%
Oral presentation of your business plan.	Required

Grades will be assigned as follows:

≥90%	A
80-89.9%	B
70-79.9%	C
≤69.9%	F

There is not an economy of shortage with respect to grades in this course, so students should not consider themselves in competition with one another for top grades. Instead, the goal of this class is the creation of an environment in which we all collaborate to create the best possible learning environment, and maximize the learning of all class members. My expectations for student learning are high. Grades of A or B indicate superior performance, and will be awarded only in cases that warrant such an assessment, regardless of the number of students who reach this level. It should be clear that active engagement of the course material is assumed, and the written assignments represent a device for gauging the depth and insightfulness of your reflection as part of the learning process. In order to excel at the written assignments, you will need to be present and participating during class discussions.

I will not accept delivery of assignments by electronic means, and I will not accept late assignments. Academic honesty is a requirement for passing this course. Plagiarism or other violations of academic honesty represent grounds for failure of this course.

Requirements for Written Work

Written communication represents a critical part of this course. The emphasis on writing stems from two concerns: First, and most critically, strategic leadership depends on effective communication, and typically, writing represents the major approach that is utilized in communicating strategic intent. The MBA is intended to help you in assuming a more strategic role as you progress in your career. However, many MBA students, even at this stage in the program are relatively weak writers. By emphasizing writing in this course, we hope to help you develop greater strength in written communication.

A second reason for emphasizing writing is to help you to develop new ways of thinking. Strategy draws on many disciplines and requires holistic thinking. This type of thinking represents a sharp contrast to the dominant form of thinking to which you have been exposed in other courses (and for which you may have been previously reinforced in the workplace). I will be demanding that you think and learn synthetically, and this is best accomplished by “writing to learn” as argued in his book of the same title by William Zinsser (Harper and Row, 1988). By writing about concepts that are new to you, you should both gain familiarity with the material in a form that will allow you to explain it to others, and engage in a form of creativity that will help you to link the course material into a web of connections. I hope that this creativity will support innovative problem solving as you discover the novel problems that will no doubt be part of your personal and professional lives beyond this classroom and program.

I will be rigorous in my grading of the written assignments. This rigor will extend not only to the content of your writing but also to the style of your exposition. I anticipate that many of you may find that this represents a substantial challenge. Even good writers find that they have to continually work at developing and maintaining their writing skills. You may find help with your writing through the writing centers at UNCA and at WCU. In addition to the required book, which is intended to help you become an effective critic of your own writing, the books listed below represent my attempt to present a range of resources so that you can select those that best meet your needs:

- Strunk, William Jr., and E.B. White, 2000. *The Elements of Style (4th Ed.)*. New York: Longman. This is the standard bearer in style guides. This book is short and to the point. If you know where you have problems, this may be the only style guide that you need.
- Glaser, Joe, 1999. *Understanding Style: Practical Ways to Improve Your Writing*. New York: Oxford University Press. This book represents a good resource for those who are relatively strong writers. Glaser emphasizes taking something that you have written and making it better.
- Zinsser, William, 2005. *On Writing Well: An Informal Guide to Writing Nonfiction*. New York: Harper. This book is a classic, with many editions. Don't worry about which edition you purchase. In fact, you should be able to find used copies, often of older editions, at substantial discounts. You may find this book particularly useful if you have trouble with how to start, or how to structure your papers. There are better books on mechanics, but few better in describing the process of non-fiction writing.
- Belanoff, Pat, Betsy Rorschach and Mia Oberlink, 1993. *The Right Handbook: Grammar and Usage in Context (2nd ed.)*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook—Heinemann. This work represents a good handbook on style, and is aimed at helping students write more effectively in the academic setting. Some of you may find the chapter entitled, "If English Is Not Your First Language" particularly useful.
- Raimes, Ann, 2005. *Keys for Writers (4th ed.)*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin. This is another book that has strong support for multilingual writers. I am particularly impressed by the table of common errors based upon the writer's first language. Although this work has grown to be very comprehensive, earlier editions that can be obtained used should be adequate to meet the needs of most students.
- Zinsser, William, 1988. *Writing to Learn: How to Write—and Think—Clearly About Any Subject at All*. New York: Harper & Row. I provide this reference for those of you who want an accessible description of the value of writing as an approach to learning. While there is a tremendous amount of academic research on the subject reported in the standard arcane journals, this book is much more fun and actually interesting to read.

There are also numerous specialized style guides. I personally like those produced under the aegis of the Associated Press, the American Psychological Association and the University of Chicago. What you use matters less than that you begin to attend to and work to improve your style on a consistent basis. Please let me know if you have questions or concerns.

The Assignments:

Papers must be typed, double-spaced (except the business plan, which may be single-spaced). When you draw on the knowledge and thinking of others, please be sure to properly cite their work using the style set forth by the American Psychological Association (i.e., a name, date style of citation). If you have any questions about how to do this, please speak with me.

The paper topics are indicated below (due dates are listed with the Topic Outline):

Paper Topic

INTRODUCTION. In approximately two pages, tell me about your background, what you want to get out of this course, and how it relates to your intended future.

FIRST PAPER. This case is directly relevant to problems in today's business environment. Fundamentally, many of the most spectacular failings in business have their roots in how organizational leaders think. This case should provide a sound foundation for our discussions of effective leadership in the strategic context.

FIRST PORTION OF THE ASSIGNMENT: Read the "People Express" case and write a paper describing the problems faced by the organization. Imagine that you were Don Burr, how should you approach the problems, and what should you do to ensure the sustained success of People Express? If I tell you that debt and spectacular losses resulted in organizational failure by the end of 1986, are there elements of Mr. Burr's thinking as displayed in the case that might indicate that the failure had its roots in organizational leadership? How could this have been addressed in 1982? **TURN YOUR PAPER IN AS AN ATTACHMENT TO THE ASSIGNMENT IN BLACKBOARD—DUE BEFORE MIDNIGHT ON MONDAY.**

SECOND PORTION OF THE ASSIGNMENT: Read the articles assigned as the second portion of the first case. These readings will be released Monday at midnight. In response to these readings, please provide a 1-2 page assessment of your approach to the case in the first portion of the assignment. With your new knowledge, how would you revise your response? What does this suggest about the importance of how you think your way through business problems? **BRING THIS PAPER (THE SECOND PORTION OF THE ASSIGNMENT) ALONG WITH A HARDCOPY OF THE FIRST PAPER (THE FIRST PORTION OF THE ASSIGNMENT) WITH YOU TO CLASS ON THURSDAY.**

SECOND PAPER. Discuss recent changes and advances in the natural and social sciences and the impact that they should have on how we study strategy. Why must any realistic presentation of strategic management take recent advances in other disciplines into account? Describe the outlines of a model of strategic thinking that would reflect the changes in scientific thought.

THIRD PAPER. Contrast adaptive/living organizations with the traditional organizations of which we have all been part. What are the key new features? How does a living systems perspective change the work of managers and the thrust of strategy? What does this mean in your life and in your future work with organizations?

FOURTH PAPER. Contrast between management and leadership. Describe the role of leadership in strategy. How is leadership critical to realizing strategy? Assess your own potential and readiness for leadership. What have you gained from class in terms of your ability to lead profound change? What additional resources, experiences, etc. will you need before stepping into the executive role and attempting to change how an organization does business?

FIFTH PAPER. How is "management by means" relevant to a systemic perspective on strategy? How does this fit within the adaptive/living-system perspective? What is the importance of systems thinking for you?

SIXTH PAPER. How does the extended enterprise represent the next logical extension to a more systemic perspective on strategy? What must organizations do to create and participate in such meta-organizations? What is the gain of such a perspective, given the statement of the purpose of strategic thought presented on the first page of this syllabus? How will this impact your work as a manager?

BUSINESS PLAN. You will produce a business plan for either a business that you know, or one that you would like to start. This plan will be written as a major project to demonstrate your synthetic mastery of the course materials, including a synthesis of your MBA coursework. Additional details will be provided in class.

As an addendum to the business plan, you should provide a brief memorandum addressed to the instructor that describes how course material has shaped how you chose to structure your business plan.

Topic Outline

Session	Topic	Assignment (due at beginning of class session)
1	Introduction. What is an organization? Introduction to traditional strategy.	
2	Wrap up on traditional approaches to strategy.	Handout. Begin reading <i>Leading Organizational Change</i> . Introduction due. First paper due.
3	Leadership and strategy.	<i>Leading Organizational Change</i> .
4	Changing knowledge calls for a new model of strategy.	Watts ("Six Degrees" 2003) The Connected Age pp. 19-42; and Barabasi ("Linked" 2003) Afterlink: Hierarchies and Communities, pp. 227-238. From <i>Dance of Change</i> read pp. 557-570, 487-553. In class we will view the movie "Mindwalk." Second paper due.

5	Introduction to the final project. A business plan and its elements. Using a business plan to project our strategy.	Skim Friend and Zehle, and read the handout "Outline of a Business Plan."
6	The need for and creation of adaptive organizations.	Adaptive Organization and <i>Scenarios</i> readings.
7	Learning and surviving as a living company	Assigned readings, plus <i>Dance of Change</i> pp. 291-298. Third paper due.
8	Continue discussion of leading transformation.	Read pp. 3-60 67-74, 103-107, 159-164, 193-203, 241-250, 281-291, 319-334, 361-380, 417-434 of <i>The Dance of Change</i> . Fourth paper due.
9	A tale of two ways of thinking. How our thinking guides our options. Extending our thinking in new directions.	<i>Management by Means</i> readings. Business plan proposal due.
10	More on business plans and the financial information generally included with such plans.	Review Friend and Zehle in depth. Fifth paper due.
11	More on MBM, and its connection to the adaptive organization	<i>Management by Means</i> readings.
12	The evolution of meta-organizational thinking.	Additional readings TBA. Sixth paper due.
13	On becoming an organizational change agent.	Readings TBA. Business plans due.
14	The synthetic nature of effective leadership	Readings TBA
15	<u>FINAL CLASS MEETING</u> (attendance is required!) Presentation of Business Plans.	

NOTE: This schedule is subject to change to better meet the interests of class participants, or to reflect changes in amount of time devoted to particular topics.