

BUSI 411 Strategic Management at the Business Level – Syllabus Spring 2025

BUSI 411 Strategic Management at the Business Level

Spring 2025, Mod 3

Instructor: Dr. Paul Friga (www.paulfriga.com)



UNC
KENAN-FLAGLER
BUSINESS SCHOOL

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Sections: 001 (M/W 2:00-3:15 pm) and 002 (M/W 3:30-4:45 pm) – all in room 2650

Teaching Assistants:

001 - Peyton Thomas (peyton_thomas@kenan-flagler.unc.edu)

002 - Aadil Suhail Ahmad (aadilsuhail_ahmad@kenan-flagler.unc.edu)

Welcome to Strategic Management at the Business Level! In my humble opinion, strategic decisions are the most important for the success of any organization. Strategic management is the process by which CEOs and TMT (Top Management Teams) determine the plans for the overall direction, resource allocation, and motivation of employees to achieve competitive advantage (above average profits/returns). For this class, you will assume the role and perspective of the CEO of organizations as we learn tools for good strategic management, and you apply them to case studies and live scenarios with modern organizations.

Business level strategic management is focused on how the leaders determine the right focus for an organization. This focus will be determined by a combination of external and internal analysis. Externally, we need to understand the industry in which we operate, as well as customers and competitors. In this class, you will learn theories, frameworks and tools to examine the external environment and identify opportunities to seek and threats to mitigate. Internally, we assess our people, process and technologies to determine our strengths to leverage and expand and the weaknesses that need to be addressed to improve our performance. This will translate to “go-to-market” strategies that allow better performance against competitors and growth in terms of profit/returns from customers by considering differentiation, cost leadership, customer loyalty and other approaches. This class is cross-functional, which means that we may consider an emphasis on marketing, finance, operations, human resources, etc. based upon our analysis of the current situation for the organization.

Corporate level strategic management (covered in BUSI 412) is more focused on higher level strategies for a modern corporation. This would include integrating efforts across a diversified corporation, more of a portfolio analysis of different business level units. This could also include decisions around mergers and acquisitions as well vertical integration.

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The class format will generally consist of the following:

INTRODUCTION	THEORY	APPLICATION
10 minutes	20 minutes	45 minutes
Recap of what we learned last class, today's plan, strategy in the news	Cover key concepts for the day from the readings and advice on how to apply to the real world	Case study discussion, strategy battles, case competitions and guest speakers

Learning Objectives

This course explores the fundamentals of business-level strategy, focusing on how businesses gain and sustain competitive advantages in various markets. Emphasis is placed on strategic analysis, value creation, competitive positioning, and the implementation of strategies in a business context.

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

1. Understand key concepts in business-level strategy.
2. Analyze competitive dynamics and strategic positioning.
3. Apply strategic frameworks to real-world business scenarios (in particular – SWOT, Porter's 5 Forces, Strategic Option Analysis, Recommendation Creation and Connection to Course Material)

Required Readings

- Please purchase the digital course pack - [link](#)
- Please access other required readings on Canvas

Office Hours

By appointment – virtual or in-person, just send me an email or text if urgent

Assessment

Class Contribution (In class and/or online)	15%
Simulation Reflection Paper: Lessons Learned	5%
Strategy Briefings	25%
Strategy Battles	25%
Final Team Project	30%

Class Contribution (15%)

Learning is an interactive process. The more comments, questioning, reasoning, & conversations held during our classes, the richer the learning experience. Your contribution to the class discussion is essential & will be scored each class, using the rubric below.

- Prior to class, you should thoroughly read & prepare the day's case in conjunction with the guided reading questions.

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- Feel free to connect with the professor or TAs if you are unsure of any assignment or to brainstorm ways to prepare for class and increase your contribution.
- Demonstrate your involvement by actively participating in class or on Canvas discussion boards. Contribution is *not* based on whether what you contribute is “correct.” Quality of comments (both in class & online) is more important than quantity. Seek to make comments that are constructive, move the class forward & engage with what your peers are saying. The deadline to contribute on the Canvas discussion boards is prior to the start of the next class session or no credit will be given.
- Strategy in the news – current company dealing with a strategy topic from the WSJ or NYT or another top journal (identify the situation, complication and potential resolution)
- 5 of our class sessions (#1,2,4,5,6) will include a Socratic approach whereby 20 students will be randomly selected to answer a question and receive a 1, 2, or 3 based on the quality of the answer (each student gets 1 free pass)
- For team projects, we will conduct a peer assessment of contribution for the success of the project on a 0-3 scale.
- We expect all students to attend every class. If you miss with an excused absence that has been approved ahead of time, you are expected to review the class session online and submit comments or the assignment on Canvas.

Each day, you will receive a 0-3 score and at the end of the course, we will determine the grade based upon the class range and average and your place therein.

Outstanding Contributor (3)	Exceptional preparation. Ideas offered are always substantive, well-substantiated with facts, yield one or more major insights, & provide direction to the class. If this person were not a class member, the quality of discussion would diminish.
Adequate Contributor (2)	Satisfactory preparation. Ideas are sometimes substantive, provide generally useful insights, but seldom offer a new direction for the discussion or may not be well-substantiated. If this person were not a member of the class, the quality of discussion would be somewhat diminished.
Attendance Only (1)	The person has said little or nothing in this class to date. Therefore, there is not an adequate basis for evaluation. If this person were not a member of the class, the quality of discussion would not be changed.
No Contribution (0)	Missed class and did not submit comments online

Simulation Reflection Paper: Lessons Learned (5%)

On Day 3, we will have a fun and interactive Porter’s 5 Forces simulation, where you and your team (8 teams per section) will make decisions given the context and facts presented. The simulation will reflect the impact of your decisions and those of the other teams and you will be presented with updated data and make additional decisions on strategy. The decision making should be informed by the readings and work so far in the class.

You will not be graded based upon the results (although the top two teams in each section will be guaranteed a “3” score on contribution for the day). Instead, you will be asked to write a one-page paper on what you learned from the simulation – content, process and application. What new insights were generated and how could you apply these learnings in the rest of this class, your college career and any other context down the road.

Strategy Briefings (25%)

This is a case-based class. You are expected to read the case in advance and prepare a “Strategy Briefing” for each class. **We will drop your lowest Strategy Briefing grade.** To make this efficient, we will give you a 5-slide template to use for each of the cases that covers the following:

- **SWOT:** Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for the company under study (at least 3 of each)
- **Porter’s Five Forces:** Analysis of the competitive landscape and strategies
- **Strategic Options Analysis:** Identify at least 3 (up to 5) major strategic actions/initiatives with corresponding pros and cons. *Note: Do not include your final recommendation as one of the options on this slide*
- **Final Slide with Recommendations:** Identify at least 1 (up to 3) top choice(s) for strategic action and logical fact-based support
- **Implementation and Connection:** Analysis of how this recommendation connects to class concepts and details explaining how your idea will be implemented

You will be graded on the following criteria:

Clarity - Clear presentation of key points and justification

Logic - Reasonable assumptions based on Porter’s 5 Forces, SWOT Analysis, Strategic Options Analysis, and prioritizing based on impact on long term profitability

Comprehensiveness - Demonstrated thorough understanding of nuances of case, company, and industry

Creativity - Considered options outside of box (BHAGS)

Strategy Battles (25%)

Prior to three class sessions there will be “Strategy Battles” during which three or four teams will record a presentation of their analysis and primary recommendation for action for the assigned case study. Recordings will be submitted to Canvas and scored based on assessments from the professor (50%), TA (25%), and entire class (25%) prior to the following class. The team that receives the highest score will be guaranteed an A for the assignment and given the honor to present in person during the next class. One team will beat the others, but the score for each team will be based on the overall performance, considering the same grading criteria as for the Strategy Briefings described above.

You will have 15 minutes to present your analysis, and a 5-minute Q&A. Briefly cover your Five Forces and SWOT but spend most of your time and focus on the recommendation (this is mainly what you’ll be graded on). Have 3 strategic options that you considered but decided against and one key recommendation for action and supporting justification – you are welcome to have additional slides for support. Bullet points are ok. This does not need to be a fully built out slide deck with graphs and images.

Final Team Project (30%)

The final two class sessions will be utilized for presentations on a live company (one for 5 teams, and one for the other 5 teams). Teams of 5 students will be formed by the instructor with the objective of aligning interests but achieving diversity among team members. The teams and company assignments will be announced 1 week prior to the scheduled presentation date. We will continue to utilize the five-slide template as the base of analysis but should be supplemented with additional work.

- The objective of the presentation is to analyze the firm's competitive situation & to identify a set of strategic issues facing the firm. You will be expected to not only analyze the firm, but also to make a recommendation for future action. The fundamental purpose of this assignment is to provide an opportunity to apply the theoretical frameworks discussed in class to a real firm while also building teamwork & communication skills.
- The content of the slides will be graded for: depth & soundness of the analysis; use of strategic management tools & techniques for analysis; conciseness & clarity; creativity & delivery.
- The presenting group's ability to respond to questions is an important part of the presentation. The rest of the class, therefore, must come prepared to question critically the presenting groups and evaluate their performance.

Final Grades

Course grades will be curved to fit the BSBA recommended mean GPA of 3.2-3.4 for core courses. Please note that your grade reflects your performance in the class, not merely your effort.

Grade Appeals: To appeal a grade, please submit a written document indicating why the received grade is unfair. Be sure to document the reasons clearly, delineating them numerically such that I can respond to them on a point-by-point basis. As will be true in your post-college work-life, grades are given based on the quality of the work, not the total number of hours spent. Appeals must be submitted within 7 days of receiving the grade. Note that if I decide to re-grade your deliverable, I will re-read your entire deliverable. This means that while I may adjust upward your grade regarding the point you bring up in your appeal, I may also catch mistakes I previously failed to notice & adjust your grade downward.

Policies & Resources

Professionalism & Respect. I choose to be honest & forthright in my interactions, to respect myself & others, & to be reflective about my explicit & implicit assumptions, values, & biases. I expect the same courtesy & professionalism from Kenan-Flagler students, & I am very rarely disappointed.

Academic Integrity. Successful academic & professional ventures are based on integrity & trust. This course is subject to The UNC Honor Code, The UNC Instrument of Judicial Governance, & the Kenan-Flagler Code of Conduct. In particular, I expect students to (1) read & comply with the instructions in the syllabus, (2) read & comply with assignment instructions, & (3) properly attribute external source material. Please direct questions or concerns to me or The UNC Office of Student Conduct.

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Materials. Slides, videos, cases, quizzes, exams, videos, lectures, & other materials are only for students enrolled in the class. Do not post them online or share them with anyone. Doing so will be considered a violation of the honor code.

Electronics. Electronic devices are welcome (encouraged) in class, to support learning. Please be mindful that they do not serve as a distraction to you or those around you.

Generative AI.

I encourage all students to embrace generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools like ChatGPT to enhance creativity, problem-solving, and productivity. These tools can assist in brainstorming, researching, and producing text, images, and other media. However, you are ultimately responsible for the final product of your work—both academically and professionally. Using AI effectively requires a clear understanding of its limitations, an ethical approach, and critical engagement.

While AI offers exciting opportunities, it is important to recognize its current challenges:

- **Opaque Processes:** The internal mechanisms of generative AI are complex, and how outputs are generated is often unclear.
- **Data Reliance:** Outputs are based on existing data, which may include inaccuracies, biases, or even fabricated information presented as fact.
- **Intellectual Property Concerns:** The sources of AI-generated content are often unclear, raising questions about ownership, citation, and copyright.
- **Performance Level:** Currently, tools like ChatGPT perform at the level of an above-average undergraduate student. To achieve exceptional results, you'll need to guide and refine outputs actively.

Note that we will run basic AI on every assignment as a baseline – if you just use what is produced, you will receive lower grades. We will be looking for unique ideas that go above and beyond what is produced from quick searches.

Unless specific guidelines are provided for an assignment or exam, the use of generative AI in your coursework is governed by the following principles:

1. **AI Should Assist You, Not Replace You.**
Generative AI is a tool to enhance your thinking and creativity, not a shortcut to completing assignments. Use these tools to generate ideas, perform research, and analyze problems—but avoid submitting AI-generated content without making it your own. We will compare your work against baseline AI outputs to assess originality and depth.
2. **Engage with AI Responsibly and Ethically.**
 - Evaluate AI-generated outputs critically to account for potential biases and inaccuracies.
 - Use AI ethically, respecting privacy, confidentiality, and intellectual property rights.
 - Avoid inputting sensitive or personal data (e.g., your One Card details) into generative AI tools.
3. **You Are Fully Accountable for Your Work.**
You are the creator of your final product, regardless of the tools you use. If the AI makes

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a mistake, and you use it, the mistake is yours. Verify facts, ensure accuracy, and attribute sources as required.

4. **Be Transparent About AI Use.**

If you use generative AI, declare it in your submission and explain how it contributed to your work. Transparency fosters integrity and ensures proper evaluation of your efforts.

5. **AI Use Must Go Beyond the Basics.**

Simply reproducing AI-generated outputs will result in lower grades. We value unique ideas and critical insights that reflect your engagement with the material and your creative process.

Currently, ChatGPT and similar tools perform at the level of an above-average undergraduate student. To achieve outstanding results, you will need to interact with AI intentionally, providing clear prompts and iterating on responses to guide it toward better outputs.

Accessibility Resources & Services. UNC facilitates the implementation of reasonable accommodations, including resources & services, for students with disabilities, chronic medical conditions, a temporary disability, or pregnancy complications resulting in difficulties with accessing learning opportunities. All accommodations are determined through the Office of Accessibility Resources & Service (ARS) for individuals with documented qualifying disabilities in accordance with applicable state & federal laws. See the ARS Website for contact information or email ars@unc.edu.

Wellbeing. As a student, you may experience a range of challenges that can interfere with learning, such as strained relationships, increased stress & anxiety, substance use, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. You may experience these challenges & others to an increased degree considering the things happening nationally & globally during this time. Unaddressed, these challenges have the capacity to diminish your overall well-being, academic performance, and/or reduce your ability to participate in daily activities. Monitoring & maintaining emotional & mental health are now more important than ever. If you or anyone you know experiences any academic or personal stress, difficult life events, or feelings like anxiety or depression, I strongly encourage you to seek support. Please reach out to me or the following resources for support:

KF Wellness Specialist/Coaches

Email: wellness@kenan-flagler.unc.edu

Phone: 919-962-9315

Coaching Sign-Up:

<https://unckf.titaniumhwc.com/>

National Crisis Hotlines

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255

Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS)

Location: James A. Taylor Building, 320

Emergency Room Dr.

Office Hours Phone: 919-966-3658 (8:00a – 5:00p)

After Hours Phone: 919-966-2281

Email: caps@unc.edu

Crisis Text Line: Text 741741

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Class Schedule

Session		Topic	Readings & Preparation	Assignments
Module 1: Business-Level Competition				
1	January 8	Introduction to Business-Level Strategy	Porter, M.E. (1996). "What is Strategy?" The Strategist's Toolkit, Chapter 1 Video: Introduction to Strategy Case 0: KFBS	N/A
2	January 13	Industry Analysis and Competitive Forces	Porter, M.E. (2008). "The Five Competitive Forces That Shape Strategy." The Strategist's Toolkit, Chapters 2 & 4 (Optional) Video: Porter's Five Forces Case 1: Kohl's	Strategy Briefing (5 Slide Template) <i>Reviewed but not graded</i>
3	January 15	Porter's Five Forces Simulation Exercise	Strategy Simulation: The Five Forces	N/A
	January 20	Martin Luther King Jr. Day (No Class)		
Module 2: Creating Competitive Advantage				
4	January 22	Resources and Capabilities as Foundations of Strategy	Barney, J.B. (1991). "Firm Resources and Sustained Competitive Advantage." The Strategist's Toolkit, Chapter 7 (Optional) Video: What is a Capability? Case 2: Tesla	Simulation Lessons Learned (One Page)
5	January 27	Global Expansion, Value Creation and Value Chain Analysis	HBS. "What is Value Chain Analysis: Three Steps" Video: What are Global Value Chains and why they Matter for Economic & Regional Development Case 3: Turo	Strategy Briefing (5 Slide Template)
	January 29	Day Off (No Class)		
Module 3: Strategic Disruption				
6	February 3	Competitive Positioning and Strategy Formulation	Collins & Porras. "Building Your Company's Vision" Video: Generic Strategies Mini-Lecture Case 4: Yeti	Strategy Briefing (All Others)
7	February 5	Business Models and Strategy in the Digital Age	Teece, D.J. (2010). "Business Models, Business Strategy and Innovation." Video: How Data will Transform Business Case 5: TikTok	Strategy Battle (Groups 1 & 2 & 3) Strategy Briefing (All Others)
	February 10	Wellness Day (No Class)		
8	February 12	Innovation and Strategic Change	Eisenhardt & Bingham (2017), Superior Strategy in Entrepreneurial Settings, Strategy Science Video: Why Innovation is All About People Rather than Bright Ideas Case 6: Speedi	Strategy Battle (Groups 4 & 5 & 6) Strategy Briefing (All Others)
Module 4: Strategic Application				
9	February 17	Strategic Alliances and Network Strategies	BCG. "Unleashing the Innovation Power of Alliances" Video: Strategic Alliance Case 7: Epic Games	Strategy Battle (Groups 7 & 8 & 9 & 10) Strategy Briefing (All Others)
10	February 19	Strategy Implementation and Organizational Design	McKinsey (2015). "Getting Organizational Design Right" Collis, D. & Rukstad, M. (2008). "Can You Say What Your Strategy Is?" Video: How to Write A Mission Statement That Doesn't Suck Case 8: Carolina Athletics	N/A
11	February 24	Final Presentations 1	Case: Rivian	Five Teams Submit Recommendations & Supporting Analysis
12	February 26	Final Presentations 2	Case: Bath & Body Works	Five Teams Submit Recommendations & Supporting Analysis