Ph.D. Course 40015

STRATEGY

Period: a.y. 2023/24 - II term
Instructor:
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Course Description.
This is a doctoral-level seminar designed to expose PhD students to some of the most recent and interdisciplinary topics in strategic management research.

The field of strategic management is fundamentally concerned with understanding why some firms perform better than others. To approach this topic, the course is divided into two main parts. We will start by establishing the existence of performance heterogeneity and understanding how different theories have explained it. We will then move to understanding better what makes a decision strategic and what factors contribute to decision-making.

In dealing with these topics, we will draw extensively from related disciplinary research in the fields of economics, sociology, and psychology. We will touch upon a range of different contributions, from the theoretical to the empirical, and from the classic to the current. In terms of methods, we will read papers that employ a variety of methods including qualitative analysis, surveys, experiments, and the analysis of secondary data.

Finally, we will also take the chance to discuss about the review process of a paper of mine dealing with one of the topics covered during the course. This should help you begin to familiarize with the process of getting published.

Course Material
The numbered readings are the only required material for the course. There is also a list of suggested readings (marked with a *) that are meant to provide a range of perspectives and a flavor of the research in different areas in strategy. All the material is available at this link.

List of topics
Part I: Understanding performance heterogeneity
- What is Strategy? Performance Heterogeneity From Market Structure and Positioning
- What is Strategy? Performance Heterogeneity From Resources and Capabilities
- Firm Boundaries and Value-Based Perspectives
- The Relational View and The Interplay of Competition and Cooperation
- Evolutionary perspectives and organizational adaptation

Part II: Understanding strategic decisions and decision makers
- Organizational Learning: Within Organizational Boundaries
- Organizational Learning: Across Organizational Boundaries
- Information Processing
- Organizational and Individual Goals
- The Value of Management
- The Role of Institutions
- Part III: Stepping back to evaluate
- How is the field of strategy doing? And where is it going?

Assessment Methods

Students will be evaluated based on three criteria:

1. Class Participation and attendance: 40% of final grade

Because of the very nature of the course, you are expected to attend each class, and actively participate. Please note that the reading list is composed of a number of mandatory readings plus a number of additional readings. The latter are not going to be discussed in classes and are not mandatory to read.

During each class, selected students will be asked to introduce and discuss the assigned materials. I am OK with you splitting the readings in advance, but every student is expected to have read the material and be prepared to summarize and critically evaluate each paper. To facilitate division of labor, please reserve your paper in advance using this tool.

In preparing each paper, please try to address the following questions:

- Why is this a strategy paper? (as opposed to a paper in OT, OB, or others...)
- Why is this theoretically important to understand? How does it provide insights on how we should think about things differently?
- Why do we think that this is economically or socially important? How can it be used and how can it create impact?
- What are the underlying behavioral mechanisms for the effects identified in the paper? How does the paper connect the outcomes with the mechanisms?
- How confident are you with the results?

I also expect you to provide a critical assessment, starting with what you liked about the paper, to then move what you would have done differently, and potentially to what one could do next.

2. Puzzle & Gap Reports: 30% of final grade

For three sessions of the course (at your choice), you should prepare a two-page document related to (all or some of) the readings assigned to that session. Please do not write a summary of the readings (doing so will be penalized), but try to use the readings as a platform for your own ideas. In particular, you may choose to: (a) contrast the views and assumptions of different authors; (b) discuss research gaps and hence potential contribution opportunities; and (c) link the material to salient business phenomena. There is no need to do all three on each of the reports: I’d rather have you go in depth with one single task than try to fit a bit of everything into the limited space you have.

Please email these summaries to me by 9am on the day of the class.

3. Reviewing Exercise: 30% of final grade

During the course, you will have the chance to take a closer look at the publication process by examining the revision process of one paper. This exercise will unfold over 3 sessions, and will require you to produce three short reports.

First, you will be asked to read the original submission, and write a referee report of this paper (as if you were reviewing for a journal). Follow the AMJ guidelines available at: https://aom.org/research/publishing-with-aom/reviewer-resources (go to “Reviewer resources by journal” and look under “Academy of Management Journal”). Please email the report to me by 9am on the day of class (11/28).

Once you have completed your own review, I will share with you the actual referee reports. You will be asked to read them prior to class and draft a brief response letter, highlighting the
three main critical issues emerging from reading the reports, and possible strategies to address them. Please email the 1-page report to me by 9am on the day of class (12/01).

Finally, I will share with you the actual response letter and the resubmitted manuscript. You will be asked to read through them and write a short commentary with the main takeaways from this exercise. Please email the 1-page report to me by 9am on the day of class (12/06).

Faculty Bio.

Giada is an Associate Professor of Strategy at Bocconi University. Her general research interests are in the broad area of strategy and innovation. More specifically, she studies the factors that foster or inhibit the creation and transfer of knowledge, within and across organizations. From a methodological standpoint, her research is prevalently mixed-method, with a focus on experiments and field work more broadly. To this end, she has partnered with a number of organizations to conduct experiments “in the wild.” Her work is often conducted in the context of creative industries, broadly defined – from gourmet cuisine to science, from computer programming to academia. Her papers have been published in top academic journals including the Academy of Management Journal, Management Science, Organization Science, and Strategic Management Journal. Her research has also been featured on the Financial Times. She currently serves as an Associate Editor for the Strategic Management Journal, and is in the editorial review board of Organization Science, Strategy Science, Strategic Organization and Journal of Organization Design. She is the Program Chair of the Will Mitchell Dissertation Research Grant Program of the Strategic Research Foundation, and serves on the board of the Consortium on Competitiveness and Cooperation (CCC). Between 2017 and 2022, she has served in the Leadership team for the Competitive Strategy Interest Group, and as a Representative-at-Large and Engagement Officer for the Behavioral Strategy Interest Group of the Strategic Management Society. Between 2013 and 2017, she has served on the Executive Committee for both the STR Division and the TIM Division of the Academy of Management. Giada joined Bocconi in 2019, after seven years at HEC Paris. Prior to joining academia, she worked as a product manager for L’Oréal Paris.
Session 1: What is Strategy? Performance Heterogeneity From Market Structure and Positioning (Monday, October 30, 2023: 10.30am-1.00pm)

Everyone reads everything, please – no nominal assignment of readings

   * Debate at DRUID in 2005 on the relative importance of industry and firm effects on performance between Anita McGahan, Sid Winter, Janet Bercovitz and Alfonso Gambardella: https://vimeo.com/druidsociety/review/310335943/847a7e9310

Discussion forum: What is Strategy? From positioning to resources to value.
Session 2: What is Strategy? Performance Heterogeneity From Resources and Capabilities (Monday, November 6, 2023: 1.00-3.30pm)

*Everyone reads everything, please – no nominal assignment of readings*

   Please read also the following two articles


Discussion forum: Few remarks on epistemology.
Session 3: Firm Boundaries and Value-Based Perspectives (Friday, November 10, 2023: 12.00-2.30pm)


Discussion forum: Application to a new research idea with prof. Claudio Panico.
Session 4: The Relational View and The Interplay of Competition and Cooperation
(Monday, November 13, 2023: 2.45-5.15pm)


Guest speaker: Colleen Cunningham, University of Utah
Session 5: Evolutionary perspectives and organizational adaptation (Tuesday, November 14, 2023: 10.00am-12.30pm)


Discussion forum: A recent example of commenting on a published article.
Session 6: Organizational Learning: Within Organizational Boundaries (Monday, November 20, 2023: 1.00pm-3.30pm)


Guest speaker: Megan Lawrence, Vanderbilt University
Session 7: Organizational Learning: Across Organizational Boundaries (Tuesday, November 21, 2023: 10.00am-12.30pm)


Discussion forum: Overview of publishing process.
Discussion forum: Overview of publishing process (continued).
Session 9: Organizational and Individual Goals (Monday, November 27, 2023: 1.00-3.30pm)


Discussion forum: Overview of publishing process (continued).


*** First part of the reviewing exercise due

Session 11: The Role of Institutions (Friday, December 1, 2023: 1.00-3.30pm)


Guest speaker: Amandine Ody-Brasier, McGill University

*** Second part of the reviewing exercise due

The editorial letter and referee reports needed to complete the exercise will be provided after session 10.
Session 12: How is the field of strategy doing? And where is it going? (Wednesday, December 6, 2023: 1.00-3.30pm)

For a complete reading list on the topic of reliable quantitative research in strategy, please refer to https://ter.ps/veridical. This reading list was put together for the workshop “Best Practices for Reliable Quantitative Research in Strategy” organized by Brent Goldfarb and Sarah Wolfolds for the 2021 SMS Annual Meeting (https://www.strategicmanagement.net/virtual-toronto/workshops/17-best-practices).

   (Please read also the following article)


4. King A.A. (working paper). the Mann Gulch disaster and the problem of the null.

Other readings (if you have time):


**Guest speaker: Andy King, Boston University.**

Andy’s questions to you all:

1. Can we scholars build shared knowledge of management? Please consider what you mean by knowledge and what would be required of both researchers and readers.

2. Is my draft article to JOMSR interesting? What should be the ending?

*** Third part of the reviewing exercise due

The response letter and resubmitted manuscript will be provided after session 11.