Objectives of the course:

This is a doctoral seminar in the field of research in Strategy. The objectives of the seminar are:

a. To familiarize you with the basic theoretical, empirical, and methodological traditions of research in business and corporate strategy.
b. To expose you to the economic and behavioral foundations of strategy and current research in specific streams of inquiry.
c. To help you develop the skills necessary to evaluate, critique, and contribute to the field of strategic management.

Requirements:

Session Participation and Leadership/Written Summaries:

You are required to read all the assigned readings for each session and be prepared to actively participate in discussions. Most weeks you will be individually assigned a specific paper or papers to summarize in writing.

Reading Assignment System

After week one, the instructor will make a master list of session-by-session writing or rapporteur assignments. Students are responsible for their assigned reading, however, students may trade assignments with fellow students...just let the instructor know.

Template for Written Summary

A two-page (typed, single spaced) critical summary of the assigned article(s) will be required.

(a) The first page should be a one-page summary of the research question or problem the article addresses, the results or insights of the article, and an assessment of the paper’s strengths and limitations.

(b) The second page should include (in bullet point form)

- Contribution: Address the contribution the article makes to the field. How does this article fit in the literature?
• **Connection:** Pose one question for discussion that links the article to other readings for the session and be ready to kick off discussion on this question in class.

• **New Research Question:** Offer one interesting and researchable question derived from the article.

• **Application:** Apply the ideas of the article to a real-world example.

Please email your summary to all participants in the class one day ahead of class (by Sunday Noon ET for Monday classes).

**Session Rapporteurs**

For each session (beginning with session 2), one student or a two-student team will be assigned to act as rapporteurs for that session. In that role the individual (team) should:

• Summarize the class discussion in two or three slides and highlight connections and themes found across the papers (both from the session and from previous sessions) The summary should not duplicate detail provided in the written summaries. It should focus on what was discussed and learned during class.

• Note interesting reflections and key unresolved questions.

• At the start of the following session, the individual (team) will quickly review highlights from the last session.

**Term paper:** You may choose to either do an empirical research paper or a directed survey.

- **Empirical research paper:** This assignment requires you to collect and analyze data. However, if you are unable to collect the data that you need, then the paper should effectively make the underlying arguments, identify what type of data would be needed to test the arguments, and where/how such data would be collected.

- **Directed survey:** You can also choose a topic area and provide a directed survey of foundation pieces in that area. The survey will discuss the 3 best papers on separate questions that have appeared in the last 2–3 years, indicate what the questions are, what has been answered, what are the open questions and hot areas of research, and how each question connects to some current managerial situation (i.e., company based application).

**Grading:** discussion participation 50%, written summaries and term paper 50%

**Optional Exercise:**

*Post-hoc Outline*

This is a useful practice introduced by Keith Murnighan (Northwestern University) in his work with doctoral students. This exercise reveals the underlying organization of each paper and helps expose flaws in the logical progression of a paper. The idea is to get into
the habit of striving for a deeper awareness of the structure and substance within each paper you read. It will make you a better consumer of others’ papers and improve your own writing skills.

How to write a *post-hoc* outline (ala Keith Murnighan):

1. Describe the main point of each paragraph in the paper using a single phrase or sentence (i.e., one phrase or sentence per paragraph, for each paragraph in the paper).
2. Record these main points in sequence.
3. Almost every paper will have holes, inconsistencies or redundancies. Point these out at the end of your outline, if you observe them.
4. After completing 1-4, rewrite an abstract for the paper in 5 sentences or less.

**Course Structure**

1. What is Strategy?
   - In practice: guidance for choice and action
   - In research: explanations for variations in characteristics and performance
2. Strategic choices: Guidance
   - Strategy statement
   - Commitment
   - Coordination
3. Strategy frameworks: Explanation and Prescription
   - Overview of the field
   - Positioning
   - Value-based strategy and coopetition
   - Resource-based view
   - Dynamic capabilities
4. Underlying processes
   - Market competition
   - Knowledge and learning
   - Innovation
   - Social and cognitive processes
   - Organizational decision making
5. Strategic change
6. Nonmarket strategy
Readings (indented readings are supplementary)

1. **What is Strategy?** (September 11)


2. Strategic choices: Guidance (September 18)


Overview of the Strategy Field


3. Positioning and Value-Based Strategy


4. Resource-Based View of the Firm


Ahuja, Gautam and Riitta Katila. 2004. "*(Links to an external site.)* Where Do Resources Come From? The Role of Idiosyncratic Situations.* *(Links to an external site.)* *Strategic Management Journal* 25: 887-907


Priem, R.L. & Butler, J. 2001. *Is the resource-based "view" a useful perspective for strategic management research?* *(Links to an external site.)* *Academy of Management Review*, 26: 22-40. (Also “Further Comments” by the same authors)


5. Dynamic Capabilities


[various short responses in Industrial and Corporate Change 27 (6) 2018 to Pisano 2017; skim Helfat, Winter, Linden/Teece]


6. Market Competition


Felix Oberholzer-Gee and Dennis A. Yao. 2018, Integrated Strategy: Residual Market and Exchange Imperfections as the Foundation of Sustainable Competitive Advantage (Links to an external site.) (pp 463-468 only)


Hart, Oliver, 1995. *Firms, contracts, and financial structure.* (Links to an external site.) Chapters 1 and 2.


7. **Knowledge and Learning Processes**


8. Innovation Processes


9. **Social and Cognitive Processes**


March, James G. and Simon, Herbert A. 1958. *Organizations* Chapter 6


See Strategy Science special issue on Culture and its Link to Strategy 2021


10. Organizational Decision-Making


11. Strategic change


12. Nonmarket Strategy and Summary of Course


Ahuja, Gautam, Laurent Capron, Michael Lenox, and Dennis A. Yao 2018. Strategy and the Institutional Envelope, Strategy Science: Vol. 3(2) pp. ii–x


Eccles, Robert G., Ioannis Ioannou, and George Serafeim, 2014. The Impact of Corporate Sustainability on Organizational Processes and Performance, Management Science 60, pp. 2835-2857


Non-profit or governmental organizations (not covered)

These organizations are dependent on stakeholders that are not market participants. They also have different and multiple goals and operate under different constraints. These organizations provide an important and interesting applications for the concepts discussed in the course.


Important subfields covered in the Advanced Strategy course (no reading list supplied)

**Corporate strategy**

Corporate strategy involves decisions about corporate scope (vertical, horizontal, and geographic) as well as location decisions. This is a very active and important area in mainstream strategy.

**Entrepreneurship and strategy**
The concepts discussed in this course are usefully applied to entrepreneurial organizations. However, special challenges of entrepreneurial and start-up organizations test the boundary conditions of the various theories, suggest the need for greater attention to some issues over others, and raise some relatively unique concerns.