Corporate Strategy Analysis

SAMPLE SYLLABUS

REQUIRED READING

- Digital coursepack (Coded CP in schedule) – ** TEXTBOOK INCLUDED **
- Selected articles in the coursepack.

COURSE OVERVIEW

This course focuses on the strategic management and understanding of multi-product, multi-location and multi-business firms. We examine the following topics:

1. What determines the boundaries of the firm?
2. How does vertical integration create or destroy value?
3. How does diversification create or destroy value?
4. How can multiple businesses in the firm be managed?
5. The implementation and limits of corporate strategy.

Whereas Business Strategy Analysis focuses on the strategy of individual businesses, Corporate Strategy Analysis focuses on the strategy of the firm as a whole, and the interrelations between different divisions. For example, corporate strategy issues for Disney might include whether or not Disney should own a range of businesses (e.g., theme parks, restaurants, TV networks, etc.), how Disney should enter those businesses (e.g., internal development, acquisitions), and how they can be synergistically combined to create value. Business strategy for Disney would include issues such as how the competitive advantage of Disney’s theme parks should be maintained. Our course presupposes a working knowledge of Business Strategy Analysis.

COURSE STANDARDS

The greatest value from graduate business education is seldom realized immediately upon graduation. Such value is realized over a lifetime, and comes from developing analytical, problem-solving, skills that eventually lead to the highly appreciated capacity for synthesis. One of the most valuable abilities that you can develop and sharpen in graduate school is the ability to think critically and strategically, and to speak and write in a logical and compelling manner.
Accordingly, this is not a lecture course. You are responsible for a large portion of your own
development. **You are required not only to attend classes, but also to carefully prepare for
each class and contribute actively to class discussion. The compressed nature of the course
makes it crucial that you prepare the assigned material for every class.**

**COURSE GRADING**

Grading will be based on the following:

- Participation (and in-class activities) 25%
- Individual closed-book quiz 10%
- Group Case Analysis 25%
- Group Final Exam 40%

**Participation.** I will use a number of in-class activities to explore concepts and tools used in the
course. Your effort and contribution on these activities will determine your participation grade. **I will cold-call students frequently, and at random.**

**Individual quiz.** A short quiz based on the lecture material and class discussions will be given out at
the beginning of the *third day* of meetings. No make-up tests available – **plan on being there.**

**Group Assignments.** You will work in **groups of 3–4** to submit one homework and one final exam.
Both sets of deliverables will utilize the tools and concepts of the class. Both will require case
analyses; however, the final will be a more in-depth version of the homework. A good case analysis
should include (but is not limited to) the following components:

1. Brief Introduction & Key Issues
   - Identify the key issues involved
2. Brief context identification
   - **External analysis**
     - Macro-environment analysis
     - Porter’s 5/6 Forces for key businesses
   - **Internal Analysis**
     - Assessment of firm’s strengths and weaknesses vis-à-vis competitors
     - Value chain/core competences
     - Organizational structure and culture
3. Analysis of the corporate-level strategy of the firm
   - Evaluate the corporate strategy of the firm according to the contents of the course
   - Develop the key elements to address the specific problem posed in the assignment
4. Recommendations
   - Make specific and actionable recommendations to solve the problem posed
   - Justify the recommendation
   - Briefly describe how this recommendation could be implemented
   - Consider implications for the firm’s financial standing and overall corporate strategy.

The case analyses should be typed **single-spaced, 12 point Times New Roman Font, with 1 inch margins** all around. Your analysis should be no more than **2 pages for the homework and 6 pages for the final** – excluding title page, references, and exhibits. Exhibits should be on their own pages,
following the references, if any. All exhibits should be referred to in the text of the analysis. You do not need to repeat information from the case in your analysis – you should write your analysis assuming its reader has read the case.

All of your work must be original. For this assignment, you should analyze the case you are given; this means you should not use material that is beyond the scope or time frame of the case. While you may supplement financial information provided in the case (for example, with financial statements from competitors, etc.), you should be careful that the data pertains to the same years covered by the case. Any external information used must be properly referenced. Failure to properly reference any external source constitutes plagiarism. To avoid any confusion over the originality of your work, your team should work alone, and should not utilize any analysis found on the web, performed for previous classes, or from any other source.

The group homework assignment must be handed in to the instructor in hard copy at the beginning of class on the date it is due. I will not accept electronic copies of the homework assignment. An electronic copy of the final assignment must be submitted via e-mail within one week of the last day of class. Note: I will not accept late assignments. Further, I reserve the right to submit the case analyses to plagiarism-detection programs.

COURSE COMMUNICATION

A Blackboard website will be available for this course. You should check blackboard on a regular basis. The course syllabus, group membership information, lecture notes, class discussion questions, assignment information, and general course announcements will all be posted on the site.

OTHER ISSUES

Laptop use in the classroom: Due to the nature of this course and the materials that will be distributed, you do not really need a laptop during lecture time. Many people are comfortable taking notes on a laptop, while some are uncomfortable seeing others use the laptop for purposes other than taking notes (e.g., email, internet). If there is going to be a negative externality, I would like to minimize it by asking those students who are planning on using a laptop to sit in the last row of the classroom.

Honor Code: Please remember that you are governed the MBA Honor Code. Moreover, every student is obligated to report any suspected violation of that code. You can find more information on the MBA Honor Code at http://w4.stern.nyu.edu/scorp/committee.cfm?doc_id=4797.

Students with Disabilities: If you are having trouble in class, I want to know about it as soon as possible. I will do my best to help students who, despite a sincere and solid effort, are experiencing difficulty. If you have a qualified disability and will require academic accommodation during this course, please contact the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD, 998-4980) and provide me with a letter outlining recommended accommodations.