

**Rhodes College**  
**Department of Economics and Business Administration**

**Senior Seminar**  
**Business Administration 486, Section 01**  
**Course number: 20188**

<b>Instructor:</b>	<b>Allan Ryan, Ph.D.</b>	<b>Spring:</b>	<b>2005/06</b>
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<b>Office hours:</b>	<b>MW 13:00-14:45, TR 15:20-16:00 (subject to change), by appointment, or by dropping by.</b>		

### **TEXTS**

Harvard cases will be available for purchase in the bookstore. We will also use various assigned readings that are available online for no charge. Please take notice of copyright restrictions, *making unauthorized copies of cases is illegal and will be considered a violation of the honor code*. In order to write the exams you will need to produce a legal personal copy of the cases. Every student also has to register for the Business Strategy Game.

Since students will be asked to be active in raising issues of current concern or interest in the sphere of business strategy, I suggest that all students become regular readers of business publications that often cover issues of business strategy. Some possible sources include: WSJ, NYT, Business Week, The Economist, Fortune and Forbes.

### **SPECIALIZED SUPPORT AND DISABILITY SERVICES**

Students who require accommodations in this course due to a disability affecting mobility, vision, hearing, learning, or mental or physical health are advised to discuss their needs with Melissa B. Butler of the Office of Student Disability Services (Tuthill Hall, Phone: 901-843-3994, E-Mail: MButler@rhodes.edu ).

### **COURSE CONTENT**

Senior Seminar is supposed to require you to consolidate the knowledge and skills you have developed in the course of your previous business studies. The interpretation I give to this mission is to require you to analyze situations facing firms and to use this analysis to make recommendations as to how they should proceed. I expect you to support your recommendations by presenting coherent and relevant arguments and information. We will examine diverse business strategies employed by companies operating in many different industries

In a broad sense I will be treating this course as a course in strategic management. Depending on which textbook you consult, the definition of business strategy will vary but across almost all treatments you will find two common claims: strategic decisions are big enough to affect the overall performance or prospects of the firm, and strategic decisions are enduring. You can't change strategies every day or every week or every month or every year or you will probably pay the price. Another facet of the academic literature on strategy is that much of it tends to deal with how certain strategies, strategic profiles of assets or industry positioning affect company performance (usually measured by some kind of financial or accounting metric). Traditionally the core discipline from which strategy draws most heavily is economics but other influential disciplines are sociology and psychology. In addition to these core disciplines you will see the heavy influence of business school subjects such as accounting, finance, HR/OB, marketing and work coming from strategy departments themselves.

As follows from the above discussion, the subject of business strategy (throughout the course, I will use the terms business strategy and business policy interchangeably) addresses issues that affect the overall direction and nature of firms. Throughout the course, I will attempt to support the contention that the appropriateness and utility of any given strategy is a function of changing circumstance. I will argue that the value of strategies vary according to factors such as: the type and history of the firm, the nature of the specific markets in which the firm is active, the dynamic features of the national and global economies and the goals and preferences of managers and owners. Given this line of argument, a key feature of discussions will be the conditions under which various strategies might be applied.

In its conception and application business policy/strategy is multi-disciplinary. Course readings and cases draw on concepts drawn from economics, marketing, finance, accounting, organizational behavior and politics. In lectures and case discussions you will be encouraged to use many different frameworks for evaluating and devising firm strategies. If we are successful then you will become adept at "taking your knowledge off the shelf" and applying it your work.

Because we are still in the early days of the 21<sup>st</sup> century I also want to pose the question of whether or not the rules and experience of the past will still be applicable to the strategic landscapes we encounter in the future. The current buzz is all about the revolutionary impact the internet is having on business and I want to make sure that we pay regular and organized attention to how the internet might affect the issues we are studying. Many of the cases we examine will illustrate both how technology is changing the world and how an understanding of business principles can help us understand how and why these changes are occurring.

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

It is my hope that you will bring some specific lessons away from this course.

These include the following:

1. An understanding of the role of the manager in shaping corporate strategy
2. An understanding of how corporate strategies come to be and how they relate to both the internal and external circumstances facing the firm
3. An awareness of the ethical dimensions of management
4. An understanding of the particular difficulties of implementing strategies and making “great ideas” work in the real world
5. An enhanced confidence in your ability to analyze business situations and to make recommendations based on your analyses that draw upon what you have learned in your studies
6. More developed oral presentation skills through presenting cases during the course.

Finally, if the above six objectives are achieved, you should accomplish the final and very important objective.

7. A more integrated view of accounting, economics, finance, management, organizational behavior, and marketing

## ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING:

### BUSINESS STRATEGY GAME (15%)

Every student must actively participate in the Business Strategy Game. Your grade will be calculated on the basis of your team’s performance, your online quiz grades, and peer assessments. **Bonus:** *All members of any team that qualifies for the Best Strategy Invitational will receive 3 extra marks on the course.*

### MID-TERM EXAM (15%)—In-class

The format and content of the exam will be discussed in the weeks leading up to the exam. It will be case-based.

### FINAL EXAM (15%)

The format and content of the exam will be discussed in the weeks leading up to the exam. It will be case-based.

### PARTICIPATION (10%)

Throughout the semester there will be a number of activities that hinge on active student participation. All students will be expected to participate. Much of this participation will require that the student has prepared for class by completing the assigned readings. Your participation will be graded on the basis of frequency, quality and your overall contribution to the course.

### **Analysis of a company of student's own choosing (15%)**

In the first half of the course all students are required to choose a company which they will employ as an example for conducting exercises such as 5-forces analyses, Dupont analyses, financial ratios, performance assessment, organizational structure and leadership. The expectations will be outlined as we progress through the material. What will be marked is a summary submission but work-in-progress can be reviewed with the instructor at any time.

### **Case and reading quizzes or case recommendation sheets (10%)**

A short quiz will be administered at the beginning of each class for which a case or readings have been assigned. The quizzes will typically consist of 4 T/F, multiple choice or fill-in-the-blank questions. Alternatively a one-page summary of case recommendations/analyses will be due at the beginning of the class period in which the case is being presented. In some cases the form of these recommendations/analyses will be prescribed in other instances they will be subject to the student's judgment.

### **Group Comprehensive Case Presentations and write-ups (10%)**

Groups of students will be responsible for one case which will be presented to the class. All will require a write-up.

### **Group Summary Case Presentations and write-ups (2 X 5% = 10%)**

Each group will have to prepare two additional cases for which they are prepared to do a 3 slide presentation consisting of: Problem definition and background, Summary analysis, Recommendations.

### **Marking**

A 94-100%	A- 90-93%	
B+ 87-89%	B 84-86%	B- 80-83%
C+ 77-79%	C 74-76%	C- 70-73%
D+ 67-69%	D 64-66%	D- 60-63%
F Below 60%		

### **Honor Code and Plagiarism**

All students are expected to abide by the honor code. Plagiarism in any form will not be countenanced. Scrupulous referencing will be expected in all written work. If in doubt—reference!

### **ATTENDANCE**

Given the subject matter of this course, attendance and participation in class discussions is critical. Attendance will not form part of the mark but excessive absence may result in mark penalties or failure. At the beginning of each class an attendance sheet will be circulated with a space for each student's signature. Up to 6 classes can be missed without penalty (although missing any classes is strongly discouraged). *Any absences beyond that allotment will be penalized in*

*the following fashion: first two classes missed—1% each; next two classes—1.5 % each; any further absences (beyond 10 classes) will result in a failing grade being awarded in the class.* Special circumstances that lead to excessive absence should be discussed with the instructor. Illness and family emergencies will be considered valid excuses for absence but since the provision for missing classes without penalty is meant to allow for illness, religious observance and emergencies, release from attendance penalties will be assessed over the full period of the course. In order to avoid any possibility for misunderstanding, any student believing that they have received any special dispensation should put the particulars of their understanding in writing and secure the instructor's signature as proof that the agreement is understood by both parties.

Th	Jan. 12	Introduction
Tue	17	Group formation Industry analysis-5-Forces, Strategic groups, Market separation <a href="http://www.quickmba.com/strategy/porter.shtml">http://www.quickmba.com/strategy/porter.shtml</a> Also read <a href="http://www.mgt.smsu.edu/mgt487/compst.htm">http://www.mgt.smsu.edu/mgt487/compst.htm</a>
Th	19	Getting industry information, Information on presentations
Tue	24	Performance analysis-Financial ratios, Accounting statements, stock performance
Th	26	Other measures of performance: Balanced scorecard, industry specific measures, Ethics
Tue	31	Applying marketing: 4Ps, New technologies, Segmentation, Knowing your customers, CRM, Generic strategies, Market size, Market share projections
Th	February 2	Leadership issues, Incentives, Life in the organization: Theories of motivation, Justice, etc.
Tue	7	Structuring the corporation: Contingencies, Transaction costs, Culture, Connection between Generic strategies and organizational priorities, Value chain
Th	9	Instructor-led case discussion: Boston Beer
Tue	14	Instructor-led case discussion: Cola Wars
Th	16	Instructor-led case discussion: Nucor
Tue	21	Instructor-led case discussion: Apple
Th	23	Company presentations
Tue	28	Company presentations
Th	March 2	Mid-term
Tue	7	Business game performance review
Th	9	Instructor-led case discussion: XFL
Tue	14	Spring Break
Th	16	Spring Break
Tue	21	Summary case presentations by 2 groups
Th	23	Summary case presentations by 2 groups
Tue	28	Summary case presentations by 2 groups
Th	30	Summary case presentations by 2 groups
Tue	April 4	Summary case presentations by 2 groups
Th	6	Comprehensive case presentation by groups
Tue	11	Comprehensive case presentation by groups
Th	13	Easter Recess
Tue	18	Comprehensive case presentation by groups
Th	20	Comprehensive case presentation by groups
Tue	25	Comprehensive case presentation by groups
Th	27	Course roundup and discussion of final exam.