

BUS 486
Spring 2009
Senior Seminar in Business Policy

Professors: Dr. John Planchon and Dr. Deborah Pittman

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Please feel free to drop by our offices whenever you need to speak with either of us; however, if it is not during office hours, we may have other obligations and be unable to talk with you. Please don't be offended if that happens. Also, the time immediately before a class meeting is very important to professors. Please do not drop by our offices for help in the hour before a class meeting.

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Text: Selected cases and readings will be purchased from the Bookstore by students.

Course meeting time and place: 9:30 – 10:45 Tuesday/Thursday in 108 and 110 Buckman Hall. All meetings of combined sections will be in Buckman 108. Breakout sessions with Professor Pittman will be in 110 Buckman and with Professor Planchon in 108 Buckman.

I. COURSE PERSPECTIVE AND OBJECTIVES

As the Catalogue description of the course indicates, Senior Seminar requires that you integrate and use concepts presented in your business and economics courses. Further, the Catalogue is explicit in outlining the major areas to be emphasized in the course. Those areas are:

1. appraisal of a company's situation within the framework of macroeconomic and societal conditions as well as the organizational and economic conditions of the firm;
2. developing objectives and strategies for the firm in the areas of financial operations, management and marketing;
3. presenting your analyses of business situations through both written and oral communication.

These areas will be emphasized in the coverage of the seminar. They will be reexamined briefly through class discussion, or at times through short presentations by the professor. Then, the information relevant to specific areas will be applied in cases.

We have redesigned Senior Seminar in Business to accomplish two broad, rich, and interrelated purposes.

- The first purpose is to engage students in a truly integrative experience focused upon the art of applying the theories, principles, and constructs studied in their major to analyze a firm's performance within the context of its industry's structure, the prevailing political, legal and social environments, and the student's own ethical framework.
- The second purpose is to engage students in an integrative experience of looking forward to the leadership and ethical challenges they will encounter upon leaving college and entering their chosen career paths.

Although neither purpose can be accomplished fully by focusing narrowly upon coursework taken as part of the major, the second more forward looking purpose will explicitly engage students in integrating their major coursework with their entire liberal arts education.¹

Historically, Senior Seminar in Business has depended extensively on the case method of instruction. The newly designed Seminar continues that tradition, but some additional pedagogical approaches have been added. Case studies of an actual situation in a company will be studied as a team project. The objective is a highly integrated approach that requires cooperation among students, teams, and faculty. Oral and written presentations for the purpose of defending their decisions and recommendations will be required from all students for each case. An atmosphere of open debate and exchange of ideas inside and outside of class will be encouraged, and students will observe that their professors do not always agree with each other and that disagreement is not necessarily bad. However, it is hoped that students will also observe that arguments should be civil, substantive and framed within the context of analyses and ideas.

¹ These broad purposes feed directly toward accomplishing our Department's goals enumerated below:

- Graduates understand and appreciate the vital connections between all the disciplines represented in the department so that they can make fully-informed and reasoned business judgments. This will greatly enhance their value to any institution that requires broad perspectives and open-minded approaches from its executives as it faces new challenges.
- Graduates are exceptional in their oral and written communication skills. Leaders of organizations must communicate their ideas effectively. These skills will be enhanced in case courses that require formal oral presentations and written analyses and also require extemporaneous classroom discussion.
- Graduates are confident and capable as they pursue careers and advanced degrees in business and economics. This confidence will be instilled from the case approach used in upper level business courses that provide vicarious experience in making judgments within a complex environment. Further, cases will expose students to recently published research not found in textbooks.
- Graduates are grounded not only in the theories of all disciplines within the department and the philosophies underlying those theories, but also in their own sense of right and wrong that will guide all important decisions they must make. They understand that integrity and moral values are vital components of decision-making. Within this context, the graduates will recognize that their liberal arts background has prepared them for the ethical challenges that are ahead. Students can not only answer questions but question answers.
- Graduates work effectively and efficiently with others to accomplish mutual goals. These skills will be enhanced by the requirement that students work in study groups.

Various pedagogical approaches to meeting these objectives in addition to case studies have been added to the course.

- Simulation game that requires a multidisciplinary approach
- Cases that address ethical behavior – possible participation by business professionals and/or Rhodes professors both within and outside of the department
- Cases that address leadership issues—possible participation by business professionals
- Inviting industry leaders to discuss business issues with students—possible case discussion led by alumni business professionals

II. RESPONSIBILITY OF THE STUDENT

Seminars are defined as discussion groups, colloquia, and round tables. Every one of these definitions makes it clear that our **Senior Seminar will be an enriching experience only if all participants are active and prepared.** Hence, all seminar members have responsibilities.

1. Adequate preparation of all assignments before each class
2. Thorough understanding and critical evaluation of material covered in the course
3. Regular attendance and active/meaningful participation in class*
4. Scheduling of appointments with the teacher when you are having problems with the course. (You should anticipate talking with us outside of class about the cases. Although we will not “give you the answer,” we will eagerly serve as guides in helping you unravel “the answer.”

*Please note that a substantial portion of your course evaluation will be based on classroom performance. Attendance is a necessary though not sufficient condition for a good evaluation in classroom performance. That is, when one is absent a zero is earned for that day. Further, frequent talking in class “just to be heard” are not marks of “active/meaningful” participation. The student who listens, thinks, synthesizes material and then makes substantive comments that move class discussion forward brings much more to the classroom than one who insists on talking in hopes of getting a “high” classroom performance evaluation.

III. GRADING AND EVALUATION

Course grades are earned according to the following scheme

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

A weighted course average will be calculated using the following (including individual grades (IG) and group grades (GG²)):

- 40% Cases (4 oral and written (GG)) Two cases will be presented in each rotation for a total of 4 oral and written grades each accounting for 10% of the course grade.
- 10% Midterm Exam - IG³
- 20% Final Exam – IG³
- 10% Class Contribution (Includes cases presented by groups, professor directed discussions, and discussions led by guest lecturers.⁴
- 10% Business Simulation Game—IG
- 10% “Atlas Shrugged” – Essay contrasting/comparing today’s economic solutions to those presented in this classic novel
- 100%

² Each written and presented case will be graded as a group project. That is, each student responsible for the case will receive the same grade for the completed case. **All cases, presented and written as a group, are to be pledged as only the group’s work. The use of any “old cases” from previous classes or other breakout sections is considered cheating. A group pledging its work also pledges that it is the result of equal contribution of work from each member of the group.**

³ The final and midterm exams will consist of case questions to be completed in class, but you will be given the case in advance so that you may prepare. You should complete a written analysis of the case selected to cover all aspects of the course. You may bring your prep-work, class notes, and cases with you for use in the exam. You may not use others’ old cases or enlist the help of anyone else in preparing for the midterm or final.

⁴ Classroom contribution: This portion of your grade **does not** include your presentation of cases assigned to you to be presented to the class. It **does** include the discussion of all other cases as well as other assigned readings. All students are responsible for being prepared to discuss all cases and assigned readings.

V. COURSE SCHEDULE

- Thursday, January 15. Course introduction, instructions for written and oral presentations, review sheets, team formation. **Both sections in Buckman 108**
- Tuesday, January 20. **Both sections in 108 Buckman.** Form Finalize case work groups and business game groups. Business Games Description
- Thursday, January 22. **Both sections meet in 108 Buckman**
Business Game Description
- Tuesday, January 27. **Both sections meet in 108 Buckman**
First practice run of business game and first quiz; preparation for writing, presenting and discussing cases
- Thursday, January 29. **Both sections meet in 108 Buckman**
Bring outline of your group's answer to the Allied Chemical Case to class for discussion.
- Tuesday, February 3. **Both sections meet in 108 Buckman**
Lessons learned from trial runs of game; read CFA article on behavioral finance and ethics and be prepared to identify contemporary examples; second practice run.
- Thursday, February 5. **Both sections meet in 108 Buckman**
A "brief case" to be handed out in class; you may prepare them with your group, but be prepared to discuss individually in class. First run of game.

Tuesday, February 10

Meet assigned section 108 or 110

Buckman

Pittman: Costco A, B, C, D

Planchon: Steinway F, G, H, I

Thursday, February 12

Meet assigned section 108 or 110

Buckman

Debrief Cases; second run of game

Tuesday, February 17

Meet assigned section in 108 or 110

Buckman

Pittman: Delta Airlines E, A, B

Planchon: Coca Cola J, K, F, G

Thursday, February 19

Meet assigned section 108 or 110

Buckman

Debrief Cases; third run of game

Tuesday, February 24

Meet assigned section 108 or 110

Buckman

Pittman: Bear Stearns C, D, E

Planchon: Mondavi H, I, J, K

Thursday, February 26

Sections meet in 108 or 110 Buckman

Debrief Cases; fourth run of game

Tuesday, March 3

Both Sections meet in 108 Buckman

Watch “The Big Lie” and “The Wall Street Fix” before coming to class; come prepared to discuss Accounting Fraud at Worldcom and the contemporary Madoff fraud.

Thursday, March 5

Midterm Exam

Tuesday, March 11

Both Sections meet in 108 Buckman

Blue Ocean; fifth run of game

Thursday, March 13

Both sections meet in 108 Buckman

FedEx case – prepare powerpoint presentation; you will be called on at random to present your powerpoint to FedEx executives; there will also be a hub tour of FedEx during the semester that you are expected to attend.

Tuesday, March 17
Thursday, March 19

(spring break)
(spring break)

Tuesday, March 24

Both Sections meet in Buckman 108
Facebook case – prepare powerpoint presentation (Groups H-M); sixth run of game

Thursday, March 26

Meet assigned section 108 or 110
Buckman
Pittman: Costco F, G, H, I
Planchon: Steinway A, B, C, D

Tuesday, March 31

Meet assigned section 108 or 110
Buckman
Debrief Cases; seventh run of game

Thursday, April 2

Meet assigned section 108 or 110
Buckman
Pittman: Delta Airlines J, K, F, G
Planchon: Coca Cola E, A, B

Tuesday, April 7

Meet assigned section 108 or 110
Buckman
Debrief cases; eighth run of game

Thursday, April 9

Easter Break

Tuesday, April 14

Meet assigned section 108 or 110
Buckman
Pittman: HBS case Diageo H, I, J, K
Planchon: HBS case Mondavi C, D, E

Thursday, April 16

Meet assigned section 108 or 110
Buckman
Debrief cases; ninth run of game

Tuesday, April 21

Essay on “Atlas Shrugged” due; description of the objective of the essay will be

provided. Outside speaker to discuss the book and link it to the current economic environment.

Thursday, April 23

Chris Nunn, case on Board of Directors;
Tenth run of game

Tuesday, April 28

Meet in Buckman 108
Debriefing of business games: A - E present results and insights from business game (outline to be provided)

Thursday, April 30

Meet in Buckman 108
Debriefing of business games: F – K present results and insights from business games (outline to be provided)