

**University of North Carolina at Greensboro  
Bryan School of Business and Economics  
Department of Management**

**MGT 491 Business Policy and Strategy, Section 04  
Course Syllabus**

Spring Semester, 2019

T R 12:30 pm – 1:45 pm, Bryan 105

**Instructor:** Dr. Vladislav Maksimov

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**Email:** [vmaksim@uncg.edu](mailto:vmaksim@uncg.edu)

**Office Hours:** R, 3:00 pm – 5:00 pm, or by appointment

**Course Materials:**

- (1) Lecture slides; developed by instructor; available under Files on Canvas
- (2) Registration to the 2019 Online Edition of The Business Strategy Game: Competing in a Global Marketplace, (instructions available under Files on Canvas)
- (3) ‘Strategic Management, Value Creation, Sustainability, and Performance’ by Page West, 5<sup>th</sup> edition, e-text or paperback; accessing instructions available under Files on Canvas.
- (4) Articles from leading practice-oriented management journals and business press; available from library and under Files on Canvas
- (5) Case Studies; instructions available under Files on Canvas

**Course Prerequisites**

**MGT 301, 312, & 330; MKT 309, 320; FIN 315; ISM 280 & 360** plus senior standing and admission to approved major — Note that these are prerequisites, not co-requisites.

**Course Description**

Business Policy and Strategy (or Strategic Management) is considered the capstone course in your undergraduate business education. It is first and foremost a course about "strategy" and concerned with "managing for organizational success". The central theme of the Business Policy and Strategy (Strategic Management) course is that a company's chances for enjoying *persistent* or *sustained* competitive advantage and/or profitability are greatly enhanced *if and only if* its managers (1) have an astute, timely strategic "game plan" for running the company; and (2) implement and execute the game plan with proficiency. We will explore in depth how and why a well-formulated and well-executed strategy nearly always enhances a company's long-term performance through strategic content analysis and skill building activities.

The content portion of the course would be devoted to explaining what it means to *think strategically* about a company's situation and it would instruct the student in the formal tools and techniques of strategic analysis, formulating a strategy, and then implementing it successfully. The skill-building portion of the course is built around case analysis and a consulting project. The purpose of the skill-building portion is to drill students in the application of the key concepts and analytical techniques and is designed to help develop their ability to conduct strategic analysis and exercise business judgment, and to expose them to top management strategic decision-making. Students will spend the semester making decisions in a business simulation – the Online Business Strategy Game (BSG). The simulation provides a realistic competitive experience and gives each student an opportunity to apply strategic management and functional knowledge and experience a top management team decision-making environment and responsibilities.

**Course Objectives:**

By the end of the semester, students should be able to:

1. Understand the strategic issues and policy decisions facing businesses and how current management concepts address these issues.
2. Understand and describe the strategic management process and the difference between strategic analysis, strategy formulation and strategy implementation.
3. Acquire an understanding of how to use new and existing knowledge to analyze "real world" cases

- and by so doing, to understand the complexity of strategic issues.
4. Elaborate on how strategic plans and policies are integrated, implemented and controlled and to comprehend the culture and ethical factors that influence these management activities.
  5. Analyze new knowledge and use existing knowledge to conduct strategic and competitive analysis using various tools (e.g., Five Forces, SWOT, Portfolio matrix models) in a variety of industries.
  6. Evaluate the formulation of business and corporate level strategies, the different business and corporate strategic types, alternative actions, and make sound strategic decisions using what-if analysis.
  7. Discuss the managerial task associated with implementing and executing company strategies, and the action managers can take to promote competent strategy execution.
  8. Assess the role of government policy in creating incentives and disincentives for a variety of competitive condition for both domestic and international competition.
  9. Demonstrate how the various pieces of the knowledge they have acquired in their functional-oriented business courses fit together, and discuss why the different parts of a company's business need to be managed in strategic harmony for the company to operate successfully.
  10. Synthesize and apply the concepts and analytical tools exposed to in the course by participating in managing a company through a business simulation game or conduct a strategic and competitive analysis of a company, both individually and as a member of a group.

### **Course Design:**

This course requires extensive student participation in the form of class discussion, presentation, analysis, exercises, and teamwork. Students are required to read the assigned reading material prior to attending class to ensure efficient learning and exchange of ideas. The course makes use of various learning methods, such as lectures, class discussion, case study analysis, readings, presentations, examinations, and team project.

### **Attendance:**

Attendance is an integral part of the learning process and your participation grade. Unexcused absences affect your participation grade much more heavily than excused absences. For an absence to be considered excused, you **must** provide written documentation, such as a doctor's note/medical certificate, explaining why you cannot be or were not in class that day. If you have any long-term medical problems, it is your responsibility to let me know about it. You **must** provide me with a written documentation from your doctor or therapist indicating the seriousness of the problem and how often you are expected to see your doctor or therapist during the semester. Each class I will distribute an attendance **sign-up sheet**. You must come to class on time, be attentive, and not leave early to receive full attendance credit.

### **Communication:**

Please, include MGT491 in the subject line when emailing me. Most of the electronic correspondence from me will go to your student email account through Canvas. You should check this email and/or Canvas on a regular basis. Class recordings require the special permission of the instructor.

### **Electronic Devices:**

By default, you cannot use your laptop or any electronic device during class. If you would like to use any such device as a learning aid, please write a letter, sign it, and turn it in to me for approval!

### **Accessibility Resources:**

If you need any accommodations, please present documentation at the beginning of the semester. Contact Office of Accessibility Resources and Services for more information: (336) 334-5440; oars@uncg.edu

### **Academic Honesty:**

All students should comply with Academic Honesty principles. Students should read, understand, and abide by all relevant Honor Codes at UNCG. Violations include taking extra time for quizzes, plagiarizing, copying during a quiz or exam, helping another with a quiz or exam, or submitting an attendance sheet for another. Violations may result in failing the course and/or referral to the Honor Council for disciplinary action. Below is a link to the Bryan School's 'Guidelines for Ethical and Professional Behavior of Students and Faculty:

[https://bryan.uncg.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/faculty\\_student\\_guidelines.pdf](https://bryan.uncg.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/faculty_student_guidelines.pdf)

**Grading:**

Component	Weight	
Participation	10%	Individual
Exam 1	13%	Individual
Exam 2	13%	Individual
Exam 3	13%	Individual
Case Study	3%	Individual
Article Presentation	8%	Team
Business Strategy Game:		
• Quiz 1	2%	Individual
• Quiz 2	2%	Individual
• BSG Results	20%	Team
• Team Presentation	8%	Team
• Peer Evaluation	8%	Individual
Total	100%	

**Grading Scale:**

<b>Grade</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>A-</b>	<b>B+</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>B-</b>	<b>C+</b>
<b>Score</b>	93.4 – 100	90.0 – 93.3	86.7 – 89.9	83.4 – 86.6	80.0 – 83.3	76.7 – 79.9
<b>Grade</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>C-</b>	<b>D+</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>F</b>	
<b>Score</b>	73.4 – 76.6	70.0 – 73.3	66.7 – 69.9	60.0 – 66.6	Below 60.0	

**Grading Policy:**

Having multiple components reduces the negative impact on your final grade from poor performance on a single component. I have also built into the course opportunities to earn **extra credit** on participation or exams. During the semester, your scores on individual components will be weight-averaged to form a **raw score**, which determines your relative standing in the class. Once you get all your component scores, I can apply a **grade curve** if needed to determine your final grade according to grade bounds at the Bryan School. Lastly, if you foresee any problems with any aspect of the course, please contact me immediately and I will do all I can to help you! Raising an issue at the end of the semester limits my ability to help you.

**Journal Article Presentation:**

A list of articles corresponding to main topics in strategic management, along with their full texts will be posted under Files on Canvas. The articles are also available from the library's website. Each article comes from a recent issue of one of the four leading management journals intended for business practitioners – managers, executives, and entrepreneurs. The journals are Harvard Business Review, California Management Review, MIT Sloan Management Review, and McKinsey Quarterly. Each team (the same as your BSG team) should select one article from the list (corresponding to the topic for that day or to topics covered earlier) that has not been picked by another team and prepare a short presentation (5-10 minutes) summarizing the key points/findings/takeaways from the article, integrating it with other knowledge from class or other classes, and drawing relevant conclusions/implications for managers and businesses. Teams will be scheduled to present on the available dates at random. **Each team should POST the title of their article of choice on the Google doc set up in Canvas at least ONE WEEK before the presentation day. Once the presentation slides are ready, please FORWARD them to me.** Article presentations also count for participation on that day for the presenting students. It is up to the team to decide how many teammates will present the article. If fewer than the total number of members, then the other teammates should reciprocate by undertaking an extra activity in the BSG simulation. Although a single team presents a given article, everyone in the class is expected to read the presented articles and be familiar with their main points. Exams will incorporate questions pertaining to all presented articles.

### **Case Study Assignments:**

Each student must read the assigned case studies and answer all assigned questions. The assignment requires you to integrate knowledge from text, slides, and case study. **No late submissions accepted!** You will receive specific instructions and the questions on Canvas.

### **Exams:**

Students take three non-cumulative exams during the semester that test their knowledge and understanding of concepts discussed in the course. **Make-up exams will not be given** except in the case of extraordinary and unavoidable circumstances and *must be arranged at least two weeks in advance* of the original exam date. You will be assessed on your ability to **apply** (not simply state/recite) and **integrate** the tools/concepts/frameworks discussed in class. You will find that classroom discussion and participation will greatly assist you in taking the exam. Each exam will consist of multiple-choice questions.

### **Participation:**

Your participation in class discussions is a required component of this course. You must participate to be successful. Your participation will facilitate a great deal of your learning. You must make verbal contributions. Both *quality* and *quantity* of contributions are important. Your participation score will be updated every few weeks on Canvas. I encourage you to make efforts at participating or talk to me for advice on participation strategies. Participation is best achieved if you read before each class and are attentive during class. Also, because attendance is part of your participation score, keep in mind that absences, particularly unexcused ones, can lower your participation grade substantially. Please, refer to the scoring scale below.

For each class meeting, I will fill out a participation log based on a points system, where 10 is the maximum. I will determine the quality of your comments based on the value it adds to the discussion. **Please, each class KEEP TRACK of your comments on a sheet of paper, put your name and date on top, and submit these to me before you leave class.** If you forget to submit your comments in class, you can submit them later **OR EMAIL** your comments to me. Your contributions will be assessed based on a simple scale each class:

0 – Unexcused absence

6 – Excused absence

7 – Present (attendance sign-up sheet);

+1 – Said something, read a quote from slide, or made clarification, adding marginally to class discussion;

+2 – Comment in class demonstrated good understanding or moved discussion ahead;

+3 – Made an insightful comment during class that integrated prior comments, connected topics together, or offered personal or professional examples;

-1 – Tardy, came late, left early, or was not attentive during class period (talking, sleeping, reading, playing games, or using personal laptop for purposes outside the scope of the class, etc.).

To determine your final participation grade, I first combine your participation scores in sets of two, then take the higher score (unless the lower score is because of missing class, in which case the higher score is lowered), and at the end I average these scores and multiply by 10. The procedure is optimized for each student individually to receive the fairest and highest credit for participation. One important implication from this procedure is that you can receive full credit (100 score) by participating half the time (and getting 3 points each time), while attending the remaining sessions. Here is a quick scheme to help you understand how this procedure translates in a participation score. If you attend all class meetings, but never participate in discussion, you will get 70. If you attend all meetings and get maximum points (+3) in half of them, you will get 100. If you exceed these points, then you will get extra credit and a participation score above 100. If you attend all class meetings and do not participate in discussion, but you participate in the article presentation of your team and in in-class exercises, you will get 80 and above. The reason for this is that article presentations and participation in in-class exercises count toward participation (+3 points).

In addition to the **extra credit** opportunity mentioned above, there are a few others. Such opportunities include: 1) supplementing your journal article presentation with additional material – another article from the list of journal articles (Canvas), a youtube or some other video (very short, 2-3 min), article from the business press, or other material based on your own search; 2) raising questions during other teams' final BSG presentations.

## **Business Strategy Game (BSG), <https://www.bsg-online.com/>**

The 2019 Online Edition of The Business Strategy Game (BSG) is an industry simulation, where each team leads a company in the athletic footwear industry. Each student will be assigned to a team based on their major, opting for maximum diversity. Each team submits ten decisions and receives feedback on their achievement after each decision. You will have a chance to make two practice decisions before the ‘real game’ begins. Make the most of these to get a better feel for multiple aspects of the game. To begin with, you need to register and download the Player’s Guide, which you will make constant use of throughout the course of the game. If you are uncertain about an aspect of the game, you are strongly encouraged to check the Player’s Guide and use the extensive online help screens before contacting the instructor, as you should be able to find answers to most or all your questions in the guide or online. You need to meet/collaborate with your teammates quickly after team assignment and start crafting decisions. A decision is a set of selections, there is no ‘submit’ button. These selections should be made directly online. The simulation is automatically administered on the dates and times specified in the schedule online and in the syllabus and will run with your latest selections. **You must be done on time!** The instructor cannot control when the simulation runs once scheduled. Simulation results will typically be available within 15 minutes.

### **BSG Quizzes**

The two quizzes test your knowledge of the game. It is important to learn how to play the game quickly. Both quizzes are offered at the BSG website (<https://www.bsg-online.com/>). The first quiz tests your knowledge of the Player’s Guide and is completed before you begin playing the game, while the second tests your ability to analyze in-game data and make decisions and is completed after you have made several decisions.

### **Overall Company Performance**

The grade for your BSG performance will be determined based on your results during the entire simulation. The simulation objectively determines your BSG performance grade by averaging your score on the Investor Expectations Standard (50%) and your score on the Best-in-Industry Standard (50%). The score on the Investor Expectations Standard shows the percentage of five pre-set annual performance targets that the company met or beat each year. The score on the Best-in-Industry Standard represents a company’s weighted average of how a company’s performance compared to the industry’s best performer on each of the 5 performance measures (EPS, ROE, stock price, credit rating, and image rating). Please think critically and carefully before making each decision for each year. Do not make goofy ‘end game’ decisions (like a huge dividend) that are just manipulating your results. Instead, your last decision should reflect the future strategic plans that you present in your team presentation.

### **Team BSG Presentation**

Each team will host the Annual Stockholder's Meeting, presenting its accomplishments through the ten decision rounds. The presentation should include:

- An update on the goals and strategy you were/are pursuing;
- An explanation of past performance with respect to industry and/or close competitors (please clarify how you determined your close competitors, strategic group, etc.); be sure to be quite honest about what you would have done differently regarding the implementation of your strategy (i.e. did you overreact to competitors’ performance, were your decisions consistent with your strategy, etc.);
- A description of current standing, including: distinctive competencies achieved; value created for shareholders; current problems/concerns; and key challenges or opportunities with respect to your close competitors.
- Future strategic plans for competing in the industry; especially how you will position yourself with respect to close competitors, industry demand forecasts, etc. What are you planning to do to improve your strategic positioning? How will you accomplish this?
- Key pro forma Income Statement and financial *Highlights* for the next 5 years, noting key assumptions (market share, pricing, capital expenditures, etc.). This should mirror your description of future strategic plans. For instance, do not plan for doubling market share and yet fail to increase your manufacturing capacity in the future.

Each of the above five sections is equally important for grading purposes. Your presentation is your chance to explain your decisions throughout the semester. It is your opportunity to demonstrate that you can leverage the concepts addressed in the course in a ‘real world’ setting. In addition:

- Your presentation should be forthcoming. Investors expect to hear truthful explanations for past problems, as well as encouraging reports and projections.
- Your presentation cannot exceed **15 minutes plus an additional 5 minutes** for Q&A. Practice to make sure the talk is within 15 minutes. Don’t spend lots of time on “fluff.” Pictures (i.e. graphs, color, etc.) will help you get your points across clearly and concisely.
- **Every member** of the team must be present and must speak during the presentation.
- You will be graded on the *content* of your presentation, not merely the style. However, a poorly presented talk may make it difficult to understand the content.
- All the ‘shareholders’ will be savvy about your company, so be prepared for difficult questions.

Finally, your presentation should meet the following requirements for a professional presentation:

1. An opening that captures the audience’s attention, establishes the purpose and context of the presentation, and previews major points.
2. A message/body that explains points completely; uses a logical, easy-to-follow sequence of ideas and smooth transitions; and supports major points with solid evidence (facts, statistics, graphs, etc.).
3. A close that summarizes major points, provides the audience with a sense of closure, and leaves them with a strong final impression.

### **Peer Evaluation**

You will complete peer evaluations at the end of the semester on the BSG website. The peer evaluation is the primary feedback mechanism concerning group participation. Peer evaluations cover all team-based activities. All students are expected to complete their peer evaluation forms. Individuals failing to complete an evaluation form will be **penalized** by reducing their peer evaluation grade by as much as 50 percent. Your ability to be a good “team player” will be valued in this class and throughout your career. I expect that everyone will receive good peer evaluations. However, this will depend on your contributions to your team. Those students who receive very low evaluations from their teammates will be **penalized** by reducing their BSG results grade by as much as 50 percent.

Each team should discuss individual expectations and conflict resolution policies early in the term to prevent discouraging team outcomes. If a team member fails to meet team expectations, the other team members are expected to provide periodic feedback to the non-contributing member. It is not fair or useful to keep silent about failed expectations and then severely rate the team member at the end of the term. On the other hand, it is legitimate and expected that you honestly and accurately assess each team member’s contribution, assuming each member has been given a reasonable opportunity to improve his or her participation in the team.

## TENTATIVE SCHEDULE OF CLASS MEETING DATES, TOPICS, AND ASSIGNMENTS

Week	Dates	Topics	Assignments
1	Jan 15 T	Introduction to the course, BSG Discussion	Form teams; Register for BSG
	Jan 17 R	Strategy, Vision, and Ethics	Meet with teammates; Read Player's Guide
2	Jan 22 T	Strategy, Vision, and Ethics	Practice Yr 11, due Jan 21, 11pm; Practice Yr 12, due Jan 23, 11pm
	Jan 24 R	Business Level Strategy BSG application, exercise	Game re-set Aug 24 at 4:00 pm; <b>Quiz 1 due Aug 25 at 11 pm</b>
3	Jan 29 T	Business Level Strategy	Article presentation 1; Decision Y11 due Jan 28, 11 pm
	Jan 31 R	External Environment: Industry and Competitive Analysis	Article presentation 2
4	Feb 05 T	External Environment: Industry and Competitive Analysis Five Forces, exercise	Article presentation 3; Decision Y12 due Feb 04, 11 pm
	Feb 07 R	Internal Environment: Resources	Article presentation 4
5	<b>Feb 12 T</b>	<b>EXAM 1</b>	
	Feb 14 R	Internal Environment: Resources	
6	Feb 19 T	Internal Environment: Value Chain Analysis	Article presentation 5; Decision Y13 due Feb 18, 11 pm
	Feb 21 R	BSG Lab	<b>Quiz 2 due Feb 22 at 11 pm</b>
7	Feb 26 T	Internal Environment: Intellectual Capital	Article presentation 6; Decision Y14 due Feb 25, 11 pm;
	Feb 28 R	Internal Environment: Intellectual Capital	Article presentation 7; Decision Y15 due Feb 28, 11 pm
8	<b>Mar 05</b>	<b>Spring Break, No Class</b>	
	<b>Mar 07</b>	<b>Spring Break, No Class</b>	
9	Mar 12 T	Corporate Level Strategy, Diversification and Acquisitions	Decision Y16 due Mar 11, 11 pm
	Mar 14 R	Corporate Level Strategy, Diversification and Acquisitions	Article presentation 8
10	<b>Mar 19 T</b>	<b>EXAM 2</b>	
	Mar 21 R	Corporate Level Strategy, Diversification and Acquisitions	Article presentation 9; Decision Y17 due Mar 21, 11 pm
11	Mar 26 T	International Strategy	Article presentation 10; Decision Y18 due Mar 25, 11 pm
	Mar 28 R	International Strategy	Article presentation 11
12	Apr 02 T	International Strategy	Article presentation 12; Decision Y19 due Apr 01, 11 pm
	Apr 04 R	Case study discussion, In-class exercise	Assignment due on Canvas by 12:30 pm
13	Apr 09 T	Corporate Governance	Decision Y20 due Apr 08, 11 pm
	<b>Apr 11 R</b>	<b>EXAM 3</b>	
14	Apr 16 T	Team Presentations and Discussion	Peer evaluations open:
	Apr 18 R	Team Presentations and Discussion	Apr 12, 10 am - Apr 30, 11 pm
15	Apr 23 T	Team Presentations and Discussion	
	Apr 25 R	Team Presentations and Discussion	
16	Apr 30 T	Team Presentations and Discussion	Peer evaluation due by 11 pm
	May 03 F	Team Presentations and Discussion	Final exam day