

**Western Kentucky University**  
**Gordon Ford College of Business**  
**MGT 498: Strategy & Policy**  
**Fall 2025**

**Instructor:** Dr. Feng Helen LIANG  
**Class:** Section 700, 701, 750 Online

**General Contact:** Blackboard  
**Office Hours:** Thu 4pm–5pm **DACH 3042**, or by appointment  
E-mail: [fenghelen.liang@wku.edu](mailto:fenghelen.liang@wku.edu)  
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**Communication Protocol:**

Email is the best way to reach me. I usually reply to your email within one business day. **Please include your full name, class (MGT498), and section (Section 700 or 750) in your email.** Do NOT send me email through Blackboard email system. The current setting in BB does not allow reply to your email.

**Required Text:**

*Strategic Management: Concepts and Cases: Competitiveness and Globalization*, (12<sup>th</sup> edition), by Michael A. Hitt, R. Duane Ireland, Robert E. Hoskisson. Cengage Learning. ISBN-10: 1305502140. ISBN-13: 978-1305502147. This book is available from WKU bookstore or [Amazon](#).

Only the hardcopy or electronic book is required. There is no need for an electronic access code. Earlier or later editions of the book can be used for this class. The assignments are mostly from the 12th edition and will be posted on Blackboard course website.

**Course Description**

This course serves as an introduction to the strategic management process of organizations. The strategic management process is defined as the full set of commitments, decisions, and actions required for a firm to achieve a competitive advantage and earn above-average returns.

In this course we will identify, describe, and illustrate the concepts and frameworks required to undertake a strategy analysis, analyze and appraise business, corporate, international, acquisition, restructuring, and cooperative strategies, as well as recognize the issues associated with implementing strategies including corporate governance. We will also briefly touch upon issues relevant to the modern organization such as sustainability, social, and ethical responsibility and diversity. Our viewpoint will be that of the general manager who has responsibility for the long-term viability of the firm.

This course is primarily aimed at providing you with the frameworks for understanding the different parts of the strategic management process. The frameworks are targeted at promoting a systematic and rational approach to understanding strategy. In the first few classes, we will use these frameworks to map the environment surrounding the firm, analyze the competitive situation facing the firm, and understand the sources of competitive advantage that lie within the firm. Thereafter, the focus will shift to models of business, corporate, and international strategy. Finally, we will cover the issues associated with implementing strategy such as corporate governance.

The second goal of this course is application-oriented, namely to effectively apply the conceptual frameworks to business situations, case studies, and writing up a major research paper. This course will improve your application skills by analyzing case studies from a wide variety of industries, engaging in class discussions, and performing individual company analyses. These exercises will give you hands-on experience using the tools and approaches

discussed in class. For the class to work well, and for you to benefit from it, participation in discussions and preparation for each class is essential.

### **Student Learning Objectives/Outcomes**

After completing this course, you should be able to:

1. Complete an external and internal analysis of a firm
2. Identify the strategic problems of a firm
3. Develop solutions to a firm's strategic issues
4. Integrate skills acquired in finance, accounting, marketing, and MIS courses to create a successful firm strategy
5. Improve oral and written presentation skills through the analysis and reporting of case situations

**Grading:** The grade will be based on a case projects, exams, and class discussion. The case project will account for 15% of your final grade, three exams for 51%, assignments and class participation on the discussion board for 34%. No make-up exams will be given. **Failure to complete case project or missing an exam will result in failure of the class.** Any instance of academic dishonesty (e.g. plagiarism, cheating on an exam) will result in failure of the class.

Point-based letter grade:

- A - 90% and above
- B - 80%-89%
- C - 70%-79%
- D - 60%-69%
- F - Below 60%

### **Course Requirement**

#### **I. Chapter and case assignments (22%)**

For each chapter there is usually an assignment related to a chapter exercise and/or to a case. The purpose of the assignments is to apply the concepts from each chapter to a specific industry or firm, and to integrate skills learned from other business courses to solve strategic issues.

These assignments require reading the chapter and case material, doing some outside research, and answering a set of questions listed in the exercise or provided by the instructor. The students should write a one to two-page answer and turn in as a word document attachment through Blackboard. The answer can be essay format or in bullet points. Detailed instruction is provided for each assignment. The due dates are listed in the syllabus for each assignment. The assignments are graded on a pass/fail basis. Late assignments will not receive credit.

#### **II. Discussion forum posts (12%)**

For each assignment there is a corresponding discussion forum. We use the forums to develop and reinforce the understanding of concepts, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. The students are required to write at least two posts for each forum: one post is a new thread/post of their own answer to the assignment; the other is a post responding to others' post by making a "meaningful" comment, or providing some information not in the assignment but related to work/personal experience with business implications for the industry or firm in the assignment. A "meaningful" comment means the comment should add to the existing post with the student's own opinion/answer/research or give new info such as a link to a newspaper article or video related to the firm/industry in the assignment. A reply simply saying "good point" etc. doesn't count as a "meaningful" comment. Discussion forum posts are due on the day after the due date of the assignment, as indicated in the title of each forum on Blackboard. The discussion forum posts are graded on a pass/fail basis. Late posts will not receive credit.

#### **III. Exams (51%)**

There are three exams each covering three to four chapters of the class. These exams are open book with a time limit, usually two hours. The exams will be released on Blackboard at specified date/time and the students must complete it before the due date/time. The exams contain true/false and multiple choice questions. Review slides will be posted on Blackboard before the exam. Students should complete the exam alone, using available material in the textbook. Discussion with other students is prohibited before the due date. Due to the time limit of the exam, the students should study the textbook BEFORE the exam, and are recommended to prepare a note summarizing

the textbook material. There will not be enough time to look up answers during the exam without PRIOR studying.

#### IV. Case Project (15%)

The students are required to complete one case project. We use case analysis to practice problem solving skills related to a specific strategic topic covered in the corresponding chapter. Each student will turn in one paper and one PowerPoint presentation for the case project. Only the presentation slides are required. No presentation is required. The grades of the project is based on the quality of paper and presentation slides.

**Please read “Case&PaperGuideline” for detailed requirement.** The students will choose one of the cases from the assigned chapter cases to write the case project. The students should inform the instructor of the choice by filling up the online survey on Blackboard by **Nov 1, Sat**, and the due date of the case project is **Nov 8, Sat**. Please send the paper and presentation to the instructor by email and also post in the corresponding discussion forum. In addition, the students are required to make at least one comment on others’ report/presentation. The comment posts are due on **Nov 11, Tue**. There are five cases to choose from: Tesla, Campbell, Starbucks, IKEA, and Haier. These cases are taken from the textbook and also posted on BB. Failure to complete case project will result in a failure grade for this class.

[Western Kentucky University and Gordon Ford College of Business Policies](#) regarding ADA accommodations, Title IX, WKU Counseling and Testing Center, Big Red Backpack, and Regular and Substantive Interaction.

### Class Schedule

This course outline is subject to change by the instructor.

#### **Week 1: Aug 18-24 Introduction and Course Overview, Chapter 1**

Introduction and Organization of the class

Self introduction, due on discussion board Aug 20, Wed

Chapter 1 Strategic Management & Competitiveness

Assignment#1 Competition in the airline industry, due on Aug 20, Wed

Discussion board posts due on Aug 21, Thu

**AOL Pre-test due on Aug 23, Sat**

#### **Week 2 Aug 25-Aug 31 Chapter 2 and 3 the Nature of Strategic Management**

Chapter 2 Analyzing the External Environment

Assignment#2 Industry environment analysis, due on Aug 27, Wed

Discussion board posts due on Aug 28, Thu

Chapter 3 Analyzing the Internal Environment

Assignment#3 Zara’s core competency, due on Aug 30, Sat

Discussion board posts due on Aug 31, Sun

#### **Week 3 Sept 1-7 Chapter 4 and Case Preparation**

Chapter 4 Business-Level Strategy

Preparing an Effective Case Analysis, Case example: Krispy Kreme Doughnuts

#### **Week 4 Sept 8-14 Chapter 4 continued and Exam 1**

Assignment#4 Case Tesla, due on Sept 10, Wed

Discussion board posts due on Sept 11, Thu

Review for Exam 1 (Chapter 1-4)

**Sept 13, Sat: Exam 1 released on Blackboard, due on Sept 16, Tue**

#### **Week 5 Sept 15-21 Chapter 5**

Chapter 5 Competitive Rivalry & Dynamics

Assignment#5 FedEx and UPS, due on Sept 20, Sat

Discussion board posts due on Sept 21, Sun

**Week 6 Sept 22-Sept 28 Chapter 6**

Chapter 6 Corporate Level Strategy

Assignment#6 Coca-Cola's diversification strategy, due on Sept 27, Sat

Discussion board due on Sept 28, Sun

**Week 7 Sept 29-Oct 5 Chapter 6 continued & 7**

Assignment#7 Case Campbell Soup, due on Oct 1, Wed

Discussion board posts due on Oct 2, Thu

Chapter 7 Merger & Acquisition Strategy

Read the chapter

**Week 8 Oct 6-12 Chapter 7****Oct 6-7, Fall break**

Assignment#8 Case Starbucks, due on Oct 11, Sat

Discussion board posts due on Oct 12, Sun

**Week 9 Oct 13-19 Exam 2**

Review for Exam 2 (Chapter 5, 6, 7)

**Oct 14, Tue: Exam 2 released on Blackboard, due on Oct 19, Sun**

**Week 10 Oct 20-Oct 26 Chapter 8**

Chapter 8 International Strategy

Assignment#9 Mini-case FIFA, due on Oct 22, Wed

Discussion board posts due on Oct 23, Thu

Assignment#10 Case IKEA, due on Oct 25, Sat

Discussion board posts due on Oct 26, Sun

**Week 11 Oct 27-Nov 2 Chapter 9**

Chapter 9 Cooperative Strategy

Assignment#11 Case Haier, due on Nov 1, Sat

Discussion board posts due on Nov 2, Sun

**Nov 1, Sat: Select your case project by answering the survey on BB**

**Week 12 Nov 3-9 Case Analysis Project**

**Case Analysis paper and presentation due on Discussion board and by email on Nov 8, Sat**

Class discussion posts due on discussion board on **Nov 11, Tue**

**Week 13 Nov 10-16 Chapter 10**

Chapter 10 Corporate Governance

No assignment for Ch10

**Week 14 Nov 17-23 Exam 3**

Review for Exam 3 (Chapter 8-10)

**Nov 17 Mon: Exam 3 released on Blackboard, due on Dec 1, Mon**

**Nov 24-30**

Thanksgiving holiday, no class

**Week 15 Dec 1-7**

Exam 3

**Your grade will be posted on Blackboard by Dec 8, Mon. Please check your record.**

## **Western Kentucky University and Gordon Ford College of Business Policies.**

### **ADA accommodation**

In compliance with University policy, students with disabilities who require academic and/or auxiliary accommodations for this course must contact the Student Accessibility Resource Center located in Downing Student Union, Room 1074. The SARC can be reached by phone number at 270-745-5004 [270-745-3030 TTY] or via email at [sarc.connect@wku.edu](mailto:sarc.connect@wku.edu). Please do not request accommodations directly from the professor or instructor without a faculty notification letter (FNL) from The Student Accessibility Resource Center.

### **Title IX Discrimination & Harassment**

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### **Academic Integrity**

The maintenance of academic integrity is of fundamental importance to the University. Thus it should be clearly understood that acts of plagiarism or any other form of cheating will not be tolerated and that anyone committing such acts risks punishment of a serious nature. Students who commit any act of academic dishonesty may receive from the instructor a failing grade in that portion of the course work in which the act is detected or a failing grade in a course without possibility of withdrawal. The faculty member may also present the case to the Office of Judicial Affairs for disciplinary sanctions. A student who believes a faculty member has dealt unfairly with him/her in a course involving academic dishonesty may seek relief through the Student Complaint Procedure.

### **Plagiarism**

To represent written work taken from another source as one's own is plagiarism. Plagiarism is a serious offense. The academic work of a student must be his/her own. One must give any author credit for source material borrowed from him/her. To lift content directly from a source without giving credit is a flagrant act. To present a borrowed passage without reference to the source after having changed a few words is also plagiarism.

### **AI resources**

In this class you can use generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools such as ChatGPT, Perplexity, DeepSeek, Google Bard, Bing, Dall-E 2, Stable Diffusion, etc. on assignments and activities in this course. If you choose to utilize AI, **you are expected to properly document and cite this information**. For this course, we will use the American Psychological Association (APA) style for citations and references. *Examples of citing AI are available at:*

<https://libguides.wku.edu/stylewrite/ai>.

### **WKU Counseling and Testing Center**

The university experience should be challenging, but not overwhelming. To this end, the WKU Counseling Center provides a variety of services to help strengthen students' capacity to tolerate distress, form healthy relationships, and seek healthy expressions of their ideals and values. If you would like to speak with someone, you may contact WKU's Counseling and Testing Center at 270-745-3159 or use their Here To Help service at <https://www.wku.edu/heretohelp/heretohelpemail.php>. If you need immediate help, please visit the Counseling Center in 409 Potter Hall or call the 24-hour emergency help line at 270-745-2548.

### **Big Red Backpack**

The Big Red Backpack program is the title of WKU's partnership with Barnes & Noble College for their First Day Complete initiative. Big Red Backpack is a course materials delivery program that ensures students have their required course materials on the first day of class and may reduce the costs of materials for many of their courses. Enrollment in the program occurs automatically when students register for classes. Students may opt out of the program each semester, as long as they choose to opt out for all of their classes. Students **MUST** carefully and completely follow all instructions regarding the Big Red Backpack Program. Those instructions will be provided by: 1. An email to all Topper email addresses from the Big Red Backpack Program one month prior to the start of classes. 2. The Big Red Backpack Program site:

<https://www.wku.edu/bigredbackpack/>

Students should refer to the Big Red Backpack Program site referenced above for opt-out deadlines and any additional details.

### **Regular and Substantive Interaction (RSI)**

The U.S. Department of Education requires that distance education courses must include regular and substantive interaction between students and faculty. For more information about Regular and Substantive Interaction at WKU, please visit the [RSI webpage](#). In this course, regular and substantive interaction will take place in the following ways:

- Weekly discussion boards with faculty and student participation,
- Weekly announcements to provide direct instruction on course material and assignments, and
- Timely and detailed feedback on assignments provided within one week of submission.

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