

IÉSEG - School of Management

**Course Syllabus MIC**  
**Competitive Strategy & Business Model**  
**2024-25**

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**MyCourses:** To access resources for this course

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### **Syllabus Subject to Change**

I reserve the right to alter the content of the syllabus to meet the needs of this class. I will notify you of any changes to the proposed topic outline and schedule.

### **Course description and learning objectives**

In today's increasingly volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) marketplace making better strategic decisions is crucial. This course addresses the fundamentals of strategy through class discussions, current case studies, short lectures, and participant presentations.

By the end of this course, you should be able to:

- Understand the main concepts that drive strategy.
- Apply strategic management frameworks to real organizations.
- Analyze real organizations strategies and their impact on performance.
- Evaluate critically the key strategic choices of real organizations.

Specific topics for each session are described later in this syllabus.

### **My Goal and Commitment**

My goal is to help you become a more effective global manager and help you become successful in your business endeavors (and life) by encouraging you to practice critical management and leadership skills. My commitment is to create a relaxed and yet engaging environment for lively debates and exchange of ideas.

### **Class Strategy**

The class format will be mostly discussion-based. The course will be primarily taught through case studies, class discussions of current business issues and important concepts in strategy. The class will be a learning community that relies on class exercises, teamwork, student presentations and constructive debates and conversations.

The value of this course also lies in preparing for, listening to peers, participating in case discussions and group projects, and in sharing your insights, opinions and experiences.

You will also be encouraged to share your future business endeavors, questions or business interests to fuel class discussions and learn from your peers. Short lectures will be used to summarize key concepts and takeaways.

**Course Requirements and Instructor Expectations**

Prior to class, you are expected to:

- Read the assigned case studies and articles (see class schedule here under).
- Compile a list of unclear concepts contained in the material that should be raised and discussed in class.
- Be ready to present and lead class discussion on assigned article readings.

**Course Materials**

- Articles on MyCourses listed here under.
- Handouts and additional readings will be distributed throughout the length of the class via the platform.



**Course Schedule here under**

- ☐ **In Red: Required Material**
- ☐ **In Black: Recommended Material**
- ☐ **In Purple: Class Activities**
- ☐ **In Blue: Your Team Assignments**
- ☐ **In Pink: Refresher and Deeper Dives (Optional)**

## CLASS SCHEDULE

Session	TOPIC	CLASS PREP. & CLASS ACTIVITY
#1	<p><b>Part A: Fundamentals of Strategy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Competitive Advantage &amp; Firm Performance</li> <li>● The Strategy Clock (Bowman) &amp; Blue Ocean Canvas/Sweet Spot</li> <li>● VRIO</li> </ul> <p><b>Part B: Corporate Strategy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Core Competence-Market matrix</li> <li>● Vertical Integration along the Industry Value Chain</li> </ul>	<p><b>Required Reading</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <a href="#">Microsoft Closes \$69 Billion Activision Blizzard Deal - The New York Times (nytimes.com)</a> (2023)</li> <li>● <a href="#">Unilever Ending Awkward Partnership With Dollar Shave Club (businessinsider.com)</a> (Oct. 2023)</li> </ul> <p><b>Recommended Reading</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Corporate Strategy (R. Casadesus-Masanell) (34 pages) <i>Harvard Bus. Pub.: Core Curriculum - Reading + Interactive Illustrations</i></li> <li>● Sustaining Competitive Advantage (F. Oberholzer-Gee, 40 pages) <i>Harvard Bus. Pub.: Core Curriculum - Reading + Interactive Illustrations</i></li> </ul> <p><b>Class Activity: Microsoft and Activision Blizzard</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Why did Microsoft acquire Activision?</li> <li>● What is Microsoft's Corporate Strategy?</li> </ul> <p><i>Tips: You should relate your answers to class content, Ansoff Matrix, Vertical Integration, Core Competence-Market Matrix.</i></p> <p><b>Class Activity: Porsche</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Why is Porsche's Corporate Strategy?</li> <li>● What is Porsche's Competitive Advantage and Positioning (vis à vis that of its rivals)?</li> </ul> <p><i>Tips: You should relate your answers to class content, Ansoff Matrix, Vertical Integration, Core Competence-Market Matrix.</i></p> <p><b>Team Assignment: Your Firm Project (Prep. Work)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What is your Firm's Business and Corporate Strategy? (Use the Core Competence-Market matrix)</li> <li>● Does your firm outperform the industry/main rivals? To what extent?</li> <li>● Describe the Business Opportunity/Sweet Spot? What is the Strategic Challenge you will address in this project?</li> </ul> <p><b>Refresher and Deeper Dive (Optional)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Blue Ocean Strategy (HBR, W.C. Kim, R. Mauborgne) (if you have not yet been exposed to Blue Ocean)</li> <li>● <a href="#">The Explainer: Porter's Six Forces (kaltura.com)</a></li> <li>● Competitive Advantage (P. Ghemawat and J. Rivkin, 29 pages) <i>Harvard Bus. Pub.: Core Curriculum - Reading + Interactive Illustrations</i></li> <li>● <a href="#">Dynamic View of Strategy</a> (O. Bouclier)</li> <li>● Video (15'): <a href="#">Example explaining vertical integration</a></li> </ul>

Session	TOPIC	CLASS PREP. & CLASS ACTIVITY
#2	<p><b>Part A: Global and International Strategies</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modes of foreign market entries</li> <li>• CAGE Framework</li> <li>• Integration-Responsiveness Framework</li> </ul> <p><b>Part B: Platform Ecosystem</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business Models</li> <li>• The 6th Force, Network Effects - Virtuous Loops &amp; AI</li> <li>• Egg-and-Chicken Dilemma</li> </ul>	<p><b>Required Reading</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">IKEA, Indian Customers And The Retail Market In India</a></li> </ul> <p><b>Recommended Reading</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CAGE, Modes of Foreign Entries, and Global Integration Vs. Local Responsiveness (on MyCourses)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Pipelines, Platforms, and the New Rules of Strategy</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Solving the egg-and-chicken problem</a></li> </ul> <p><b>Class Activity: Ikea</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What are the most important CAGE factors for Ikea in India?</li> <li>2. Apply the Integration-Responsiveness Framework! What is Ikea's global strategy?</li> <li>3. Is Ikea outperforming its rivals in India?</li> </ol> <p><b>Team Assignment: Your Firm Project (Prep. Work)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What foreign market entries should you select, and what global strategy should you engage in (using the Integration-Responsiveness Framework)?</li> <li>• What could be/is your firm's business model/platform ecosystem?</li> <li>• How could your firm start its digital transformation? How would you resolve its egg-and-chicken dilemma?</li> </ul> <p><b>Deeper Dive (Optional)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">IBM100 - The Globally Integrated Enterprise</a> (Palmisano)</li> </ul>

Session	TOPIC	CLASS PREP. & CLASS ACTIVITY
#3	<p><b>Part A: Execution &amp; Corporate Culture</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>McKinsey 7-S Framework</li> <li>Corporate Culture and Corporate Performance</li> </ul> <p><b>Part B: Early Birds Presentation (Three to Four Teams)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is your Business Opportunity/Sweet Spot/Strategic Challenge?</li> <li>What foreign market entries did you select, and what global strategy should you engage in (using the Integration-Responsiveness Framework)?</li> <li>What could be/is your firm's business model/platform ecosystem?</li> <li>How could your firm start its digital transformation? How would you resolve its egg-and-chicken dilemma?</li> <li>7-minute presentation per group</li> <li>7-minute Q&amp;A and Debrief per group</li> </ul>	<p><b>Required Reading</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Case Study: SeCyber, Silicon Valley: Time for Change? (O. Bouclier, 2022)</li> </ul> <p><b>Recommended Reading</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">McKinsey 7-S Framework</a> (McKinsey &amp; Company)</li> </ul> <p><b>Team Assignment: SeCyber (Deadline)</b>  <b>To be submitted as early as you can, before the start of Session #3</b></p> <p>A Team paper based on the case study: <i>SeCyber, Silicon Valley: Time for Change?</i> (MyCourses)</p> <p>A 1.5-spaced, 12-size font, and <u>no more</u> than 1,000-word document (Word format to be left in the drop box/MyCourses. You should draw from the case (including exhibits) to answer the following questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has SeCyber created an “uncontested market space” akin to a Blue Ocean? Why? Why not? (<i>about 200 words</i>)</li> <li>What <b>Corporate</b> Strategy could SeCyber engage in? (<i>use slides/frameworks from sessions #1/#2 to address this question, 200 words</i>)</li> <li>How would you describe SeCyber's corporate culture? Is it a source of competitive advantage? (<i>Please use slides referring to Corporate Culture on MyCourses. Tips: Use the following dimensions: Results Orientation, Collaboration, Integrity, Customer Orientation, Adaptability, and assign each of them a low, medium or high mark along with your observations, about 300 words</i>)</li> <li>What are the four most critical factors SeCyber should change to increase its organizational effectiveness? Please apply the McKinsey's 7-S Framework (<i>Link on MyCourses and here above, about 200 words</i>)</li> <li>Advise Louise! Should she follow her American boss or her European boss? Why? (<i>about 200 words</i>)</li> </ol> <p><b>Team Assignment: Your Firm Project (Prep. Work)</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How would you describe your firm's corporate culture? Does it need to evolve?</li> </ol> <p><b>Refresher and Deeper Dives (Optional)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Promise and Problem of Organizational Culture: CEO Personality, Culture and Firm Performance (O'Reilly, Caldwell, Chatman, Doerr, 2014)</li> <li> What is Stakeholder Theory? - R. Edward Freeman</li> <li> What is Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)?</li> </ul>

Session	TOPIC	ASSIGNMENT DUE & CLASS ACTIVITY
#4	<p><b>Your Firm Project: (Remaining) Team Presentations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7-minute presentation per group</li> <li>7-minute Q&amp;A and Debrief per group</li> </ul>	<p>Requirements (See syllabus here under and on MyCourses: “Your Firm Project”)</p> <p><b>Team Assignment: Presentations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All details hereafter</li> </ul>

### Course Components and Grades

Assignment	Type	Weighting (%)
Contribution (Participation x Attendance)	Individual	20
Team Paper (Session #3: SeCyber)	Group	30
Your Firm Project (Session #3 or #4)	Group	50
<b>Total</b>		<b>100%</b>

### Your Firm Project

- Students work in Teams of 5 (min) to 6 (max).
- Each Team makes a 7-minute (max) presentation to the rest of the class. Another 7 minutes (per presentation) will be used for Q&As and feedback.
- Before the presentation, each group uploads their presentation on MyCourses.
- Each group will select a firm of their choice (more details on MyCourses under “My Firm Project”).
- Each group member turns in a ‘peer evaluation’ prior to the presentation (to be emailed to the instructor). The ‘peer evaluation’ is a form in which each group member evaluates other group members on their level of participation and overall contribution to the team’s success on this project. The form can be found at the end of the syllabus.
- Please note that if any member fails to actively contribute to this assignment, their individual grade will be lowered at the discretion of the instructor based upon peer evaluations!
- The rest of the class must be ready to ask questions at the end of the group presentation.

### Main objectives

- Think and present as a strategy consultant or manager/leader of the firm selected.
- Hone your presentation skills.
- Handle questions and contradictions in public.
- Further learn how to effectively collaborate and communicate with team members.
- Concisely articulate a strategic challenge, formulate a strategy and make recommendations.

### Presentation

- Please note: No mere regurgitation of the facts! So, descriptive and historical background should be limited to what is absolutely essential to address the points hereafter.
- Participants can find more details on MyCourses under “Your Firm Project”. Here is an example of presentation outline (more tips on MyCourses under “Your Firm Project”). Feel free to be creative of course. **Parts in bold (here under) are compulsory!**

#### FRAMING (1-2 slides)

- **Identify one of your firm’s strategic challenges or business opportunities**
  - Narrow the scope of your project (e.g., a region/country, a specific challenge/opportunity)
  - **Make sure your claim(s) are supported by a few numbers/facts using the most recent numbers (so, latest Firm’s Financial Statements)**

#### FORMULATING (2-3 slides)

- Value Proposition + Positioning (using the Strategy Canvas of Blue Ocean) to address the strategic challenge and/or respond to the business opportunity

- **Corporate Strategy/International Strategy (using the Core Competence-Market Matrix and the Integration-Responsiveness Frameworks)**
- Business Model - Platform Ecosystem - Network Effects (use the 6th Force and visuals such as those discussed in class)

#### EXECUTING (1 slide)

- **Execution/Recommendations/Next Steps (use the McKinsey 7-S Framework and course content, Session #3)**

#### Class Contribution

Again, this is a case-based, discussion-oriented course so each of you is expected to actively participate. We are interested in your substantiated views and rationale and encourage respectful debate, creativity, and expression of ideas. This may develop from the presentation of material, current business events, case update materials, relevant articles, video clips, or setting up guest speakers.

#### Attendance

I expect you to attend every class, arriving on time so that we can start promptly. The accumulation of several cases can seriously affect your final grade. Late arrivals or early departures are considered absences.

### GRADING RUBRICS

#### Contribution

The following guidelines will be employed in determining class **contribution** grades (out of 20 points)

$$\text{Contribution} = \text{Attendance} \times \text{Participation}$$

	Strong Attendance	Moderate Attendance (1 abs.)	Low Attendance (2 or more abs.)
Strong Participation	15-20	11-13	8
Moderate Participation	12-14	9-10	6-7
Low/No Participation	10-11	8	0-6
Disruptions (chit-chats, texts during class...)	Impact on contribution grade		

Each student's contribution to class learning is evaluated and tracked for each session. Final evaluation of contribution is at the discretion of the instructor and based on experience and careful observations.

You are encouraged to talk with me regarding your participation to date. Also, please see grading rubrics in this syllabus.

### Group Presentation

Please note that **70%** of the grade will be based on the dimensions **in pink here under!**

	<b>16-20 Range</b>	<b>10-15 Range</b>	<b>0-9 Range</b>
<b>Content</b>	Well defined presentation with a clear opening. Statement grounded in the data. The ideas/suggestions are aligned with supporting data. Questions are answered concisely. The conclusion and recommendations are clear, realistic and consistent with the rest of the report.	Has an opening statement. The ideas are not fully supported by data. Some ideas, the conclusion and recommendations are rather realistic and consistent with the rest of the report although some data are missing.	Loses focus more than once. Strategy and ideas are not or rarely supported by data. Recommendations are neither specific nor realistic and not consistent with the rest of the report.
<b>Quality of Slides</b>	Readable, professional, creative and imaginative (without being a distraction).	Mostly readable and professional. Displays some originality and creativity but some slides need editing.	Sloppy, difficult to read. Many slides are superfluous or missing relevant data.
<b>Organization &amp; Logical Flow STORYTELLING</b>	A good story with a logical flow and good transitions from one slide to the next. It ties sections together. Effective time management.	Although the presentation is mostly organized, it does not always flow. Some sections are not fully consistent with others.	Hard to follow and transition poorly from one slide to the next. Does not manage time effectively.
<b>Professionalism, Voice &amp; Pace Handling of Questions</b>	<b>Posture of a working professional. Confident shows command of topics. Excellent delivery, projects enthusiasm and uses appropriate pace and volume. Confidently address the questions of peers and the instructor.</b>	Appropriate posture, word choice is acceptable (no slang), keeps nervousness under control. Delivery is mostly clear and natural. Appropriate pace and volume.	Casual attitude, informal and inappropriate use of language. Mumbling, hard to understand, too fast or too slow, too soft. Does not manage time effectively.

### Grading guidelines for your paper

The paper:

- Is a **concise**, easy to read report.
- It shows an ability to use data in the case to **analyze and make recommendations**.
- Avoids a mere regurgitation of the facts.
- Responds fully to the assignment.
- Critically analyzes the case by applying frameworks and accurately uses class terminology.
- Makes recommendations that are reasonable and consistent with the analysis.
- Exercises good critical thinking (i.e., makes logical arguments that are supported by evidence provided in the case).
- Makes the connection between the support and the analysis/argument.
- Be focused, well-organized, cohesive, free of errors in grammar, punctuation, and spelling.
- Correctly documents and cites sources.



**COMPULSORY PEER EVALUATION FORM**

**Please note: that not sharing it will individually impact your participation grade by *2 points***

ChallengeMe, a tool on MyCourses, provides an opportunity to evaluate the contribution of each of your group's members to the output of the group.

All evaluation forms will be held in the strictest confidence, seen only by me.