

International Business in the Era of Disruptions

(MNGT-C2001, 6 ECTS)

SYLLABUS (Draft – changes might happen)

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Instructor's contact information	Course information
Assistant Professor Aleksi Niittymies E-mail: aleksi.niittymies@aalto.fi Office: BIZ building, Management Studies Office Hours: upon agreement	Status of the course: Mandatory course of the Strategy specialization, BSc Studies in Management Academic Year, Period: 2023-2024, Period III Location: R001/U135a U7 PWC. Language of Instruction: English
Teaching assistant: Emilia Eräpolku E-mail: emilia.erapolku@aalto.fi	Course Website: https://mycourses.aalto.fi/course/view.php?id=40757

1. OVERVIEW

Understanding the dynamics, opportunities, and risks of international business is practically a must for everyone in today's business environment. In the last few years, the global business environment has become increasingly volatile and unpredictable. There are significant, potentially disruptive forces affecting businesses today such as climate change, technological advances, entirely new business models, and rapid shifts in the political landscape. In addition, the global pandemic and the war in Ukraine has caught many businesses by surprise, rendering the future hard to predict.

This course provides a theoretically grounded overview of key issues, opportunities and challenges in global business. We will assess the implications of (de-)globalization for firms and their operating environment. We will also analyze firms' needs to adjust their strategies and operations due to disruptive changes. The course covers key concepts and principles of conducting international business, including functional perspectives such as human resources and strategy. The role of politics and regulation are also covered from the viewpoint of world trade and regional economic blocs. The premises that various countries provide for companies in terms of competitiveness are analyzed. Ethical issues as well as social and environmental responsibility are addressed.

Thus, the purpose of the course is to i) present the most important forces affecting international business today, ii) introduce various international strategies, and iii) present ways to organize, coordinate and control international activities.

2. PREREQUISITES

No formal prerequisites exist.

3. LEARNING OUTCOMES

The key objectives of the course are to i) introduce the frameworks and tools for analyzing the global business environment, ii) compare various modes of doing business across borders, and iii) present approaches to the planning, implementation and management of business activities globally.

The learning outcomes include:

- enhanced awareness of the differences in global business environment, including political, regulatory and cultural aspects
- improved understanding of the suitability of various ways to conduct business across contexts, including adaptation
- appreciation of ethical and social responsibility issues
- ability to analyze and plan global business activities
- ability to solve problems presented in real-life cases

4. ASSESSMENT AND GRADING

The course assessment will be based on the following components:

Individual assignments (50%):

- Reflection papers (2 x 10 points)
- Final reflection paper (20 points)
- Pre-class assignments (10 points)

Class participation (10%):

- Active contribution to other students' learning in class (10 points)
- One bonus point is given to those who fill in the course feedback form

Case studies done in teams (40%)

- Peer-teaching (10 points)
- Presentation: slides and Q&A (20 points)
- Executive summary (10 points)

Regular class attendance is expected of all participants, as described under 'Class attendance and active participation' section. You are also expected to be in class on time.

Grade (0 to 5) is based on the points below:

0-49 points	= 0
50-59 points	= 1
60-69 points	= 2
70-79 points	= 3
80-89 points	= 4
90-100 points	= 5

All assignments must be submitted and the final case presentation made in order to get the final grade for the course. General feedback is given during the lectures and/or on MyCourses following the submissions. Specific feedback will be given personally for students or teams upon request.

Note that turning in class assignments is considered acknowledgement of guidelines on scholastic honesty and academic integrity (see section 9).

5. ASSIGNMENTS

This course consists of individual assignments and a case study made in teams, in addition to class participation. Please find below a detailed description of the assignments.

Individual assignments – reflection papers, final paper & pre-class assignments (50%)

The reflection papers help you to reflect on the knowledge accumulated from the course material, including readings, other materials, and lectures. The purpose of the reflection papers is to summarize the key knowledge and bring your own perspective to it. In the reflection paper, you should summarize YOUR key lessons of the material covered since the start of the course or the deadline of the previous reflection paper. You may for instance reflect on what you found surprising, particularly interesting, or things that you do not agree with. Excellent papers are those in which you describe your own learning as well as demonstrate critical and analytical thinking by combining takeaways from multiple sources, for example video and article. In the final longer reflection paper, you will be given a set of questions which you are expected to answer based on your learnings from the whole course.

Please use academic referencing (text references as well as reference list) in all written assignments. Failure to follow academic writing standards may lead to failing the assignments. Please use APA referencing style: <https://apastyle.apa.org/>

Format: Length of maximum 2 pages (except final paper: 5 pages), font 12, line spacing: 1,5. The first two reflection papers can also be substituted with 4-5 min video reflection.

Deadline: The assignment must be uploaded to the assignment submission box in MyCourses by 17.00 on Monday of the submission week.

Evaluation: Maximum number of points for each reflection paper is 10, except for the final paper that is 20.

Another 10 points are given based on pre-class assignments that are completed in MyCourses. The quizzes open after the previous lecture and close at 13.00 of the day of the lecture.

Peer-teaching assignment in teams (10%)

In this assignment, students will be divided into teams and are expected to teach the most central entry modes to fellow students. The entry modes that we will cover are predefined and assigned randomly to the teams by the teacher. The aim is that the groups can understand and discuss how the different entry modes are related to firm internationalization after the teaching sessions. The presentation could cover, for instance, what is the central logic of the entry mode, its pros/cons, in which conditions it is a good option, and so forth. Each group has about 15 minutes to teach the model. As the idea is to effectively teach the group's topic to the rest of the class, the assessment will be based on both taught material as well as pedagogical touch and innovative teaching methods. Students are expected to identify and use relevant scientific articles for the assignment.

The models for peer teaching:

(1) Exporting, (2) Licensing, (3) Franchising, (4) Strategic alliances, (5) Joint ventures, (6) Wholly owned subsidiaries

Deadline: All material must be uploaded on MyCourses before the session.

Evaluation: Maximum number of points for the assignment is 10.

Case study assignment in teams (30%)

Each team will consist of 4-5 students. The teams will be formed by the teachers during the first week of the course, so please make sure to be present during the first lectures. (In case of absence, please contact the teaching assistant ahead of time and also kindly inform her if you decide not to take the course to give space to a fellow student). The teams will themselves choose a case company and a topic to work on. The topic should be a relevant business or management issue that has a clear problem – or opportunity – in the era of disruptions and a significant international dimension. For instance, the topic could be related to a spin off, divestment decision, management of the global value chain of which a company is part, or cross-border people management.

When choosing the case and topic, it is worth considering the availability of information about the organization and the issue that you are analyzing. Nokian Tyres cannot be the case company as it is covered in-depth during the lectures. You may collect primary data but the assignment can also be done entirely based on secondary data. Use a relevant theory discussed during the course as an analytical tool. The teams are encouraged to meet face-to-face, whenever possible. The topics need to be approved by the teachers and there is a face-to-face meetings with them during the third week of the course. The booking will be available in MyCourses during the second week. In addition, there is a consultation available about the case assignment during session 7.

There are two deliverables: i) a set of PowerPoint (or equivalent) slides, real-time presentation and Q&A (20 points), and ii) an executive summary of the assignment (maximum 1 page, 10 points). The time allocated for each case will be decided and communicated during the course.

Deadline: All material must be uploaded on MyCourses by 12 noon on February 7.

Evaluation: Maximum number of points for the assignment is 30.

Class attendance and active participation (10%)

Active participation in the class is considered integral part of learning and therefore, it represents a maximum of 10 points of your final grade. This assessment will be based on the quality and consistency of your contributions to other students' learning in class throughout the course, rather than on a per-class basis.

To get credit for the course, 70% of the lectures must be attended (7/10). Exceptions are made based on 'force majeure' reasons such as illness. If you need to be absent due to medical reasons, compensatory assignments will be provided.

6. READINGS

The teaching case is available on MyCourses. You are expected to download the other readings yourself based on the references provided in the schedule. These readings are available via the Aalto University library services, and you can find them easily by searching with the article name (please note this works on any Aalto computer, but not elsewhere), or via our university library webpages.

Articles and other readings assigned for a particular lecture session

Bartlett, C. A., & Ghoshal, S. (1988). Organizing for worldwide effectiveness: The transnational. *S. California Management Review*, 31(1), 54.

Ciravegna, L., Ahlstrom, D., Michailova, S., Oh, C. H., & Gaur, A. (2023). Exogenous shocks and MNEs: Learning from pandemics, conflicts, and other major disruptions. *Journal of World Business*, 58(6), 101487. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jwb.2023.101487>

De Villa, M.,A. (2023). Assessing geopolitical risk: A multi-level approach for top managers of multinationals. *AIB Insights*, 23(1), 1-7. doi:<https://doi.org/10.46697/001c.67875>

Ely, R. J., & Thomas, D. A. (2020). Getting serious about diversity. *Harvard Business Review*, 98(6), 114-122.

Kobrin, S. J. (2017). Bricks and mortar in a borderless world: Globalization, the backlash, and the multinational enterprise. *Global Strategy Journal*, 7(2), 159-171.

Mudambi, R. (2008). Location, control and innovation in knowledge-intensive industries. *Journal of Economic Geography*, 8(5), 699-725. Read pages 702-715 starting from section 2.2. Location: value-added and the value chain.

Tarique, I., & Schuler, R. S. (2010). Global talent management: Literature review, integrative framework, and suggestions for further research. *Journal of World Business*, 45(2), 122-133.

Wenzel, M., Stanske, S., & Lieberman, M. B. (2021). Strategic responses to crisis. *Strategic Management Journal*, 42(2), O16-O27. <https://doi.org/10.1002/smj.3161>

World Bank. 2020. *World Development Report 2020: Trading for Development in the Age of Global Value Chains*. Washington, DC: World Bank. doi:10.1596/978-1-4648-1457-0. pp. 14-21. Available at <https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/wdr2020>

Cases

Nokian Tyres (available at MyCourses)

Extra readings

Dau, L. A., Beugelsdijk, S., Fleury, M. T. L., Roth, K., & Zaheer, S. (2022). What makes international business unique and important as a field? the three cs of IB. *AIB Insights*, 22(2), 1-9. doi:<https://doi.org/10.46697/001c.33698>

Lee, D., & Glosserman, B. (2022). How companies can navigate today's geopolitical risks. *Harvard Business Review*, November, 28. <https://hbr.org/2022/11/how-companies-can-navigate-todays-geopolitical-risks>

SCHEDULE

Session	Date	Topic(s)	Lecturer(s)	Readings	Assignments
1	Wed 10.1. 13:15 – 16:00	Introduction and course practicalities What are disruptions and megatrends? What is international business?	Aleksi Niittymies	Video: Chip War (2023) Dau et al., 2022 (optional)	
2.	Fri 12.1. 13:15 – 16:00	The global business environment: political, economic and legal dimensions Geopolitical risks	Aleksi Niittymies	Kobrin, 2017 De Villa, 2023 Case: Nokian Tyres Lee & Glosserman, 2022 (optional)	Quiz 1 (pre-assignment for session 2) closes at 13.00
3.	Wed 17.1. 13:15 – 16:00	Global supply chains Global value chains	Iiris Saittakari	Mudambi, 2008 (p.706-715) World Bank. 2020 Podcast: Supply Chain Disruptions with Chris Mills, CEO of Lion Brand Yarn Video: Why are supply chain problems causing issues on shop shelves?	Reflection paper 1 due 15.1. 17.00. Quiz 2 (pre-assignment for session 3) closes at 13.00
4.	Fri 19.1. 13:15 – 16:00	Peer-teaching assignment: Entry modes	Aleksi Niittymies		Submit your case company to MyCourses: Please sign up for a team meeting with your supervisor and be prepared to discuss your project during January 22-26.
5.	Wed 24.1. 13:15 – 16:00	International strategy & expansion	Aleksi Niittymies	Bartlett & Ghoshal, 1988 Podcast: Global Growth Needs a Local Approach	Quiz 3 (pre-assignment for session 5) closes at 13.00
6.	Fri 26.1. 13:15 – 16:00	International Human Resource Management practices Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI)	Dina Myllymäki Linyu Liu	Tarique & Schuler, 2010 Ely & Thomas, 2020	Quiz 4 (pre-assignment for session 6) closes at 13.00

Session	Date	Topic(s)	Lecturer(s)	Readings	Assignments
		Cultural differences: case China		Podcast: How the Pandemic Changed Talent Management Podcast: Equity by Design: How Diversity Ignites Creativity (optional)	
7.	Wed 31.1. 13:30 – 16:00	Sustainability as a disruption Teamwork & consultation about the case assignments	Aleksi Niittymies	Ciravegna et al., 2023	Reflection paper 2 due 29.1. at 17.00. Quiz 5 (pre-assignment for session 7) closes at 13.00
8.	Fri 2.2. 13:15 – 16:00	Disruptions and international business – Case M Room I like (I wish) Team feedback session	Niko Sandell, CMO/CTO @ M Room Iiris Saittakari	Wenzel et al., 2020	
9.	Wed 7.2. 13:15 – 16:00	Team presentations	Aleksi Niittymies	Team presentations	Power point slides and executive summary due 7.2 at noon.
10.	Fri 9.2. 13:15 – 16:00	Team presentations; Course wrap-up	Aleksi Niittymies	Team presentations	
	Fri 16.2				Final paper due 16.2. 17.00.

7. COURSE WORKLOAD

Classroom hours, online	30h
Class preparation	35h
Assignments	95h
Total	160h (6 cr)

8. ETHICAL RULES

Aalto University Code of Academic Integrity and Handling Violations Thereof

<https://into.aalto.fi/display/ensaannot/Aalto+University+Code+of+Academic+Integrity+and+Handling+Violations+Thereof>