

International Business in the Era of Disruptions

(MNGT-C2001, 6 ECTS)

SYLLABUS

Instructor's contact information	Course information
Professor Hannu Seristö E-mail: hannu.seristo@aalto.fi Office: BIZ building, Management Studies Office Hours: upon agreement	Status of the course: Mandatory course of the specialization area Strategic Management, BSc Studies in Management Academic Year, Period: 2021-2022, Period I Location: Online via Zoom Language of Instruction: English Course Website: https://mycourses.aalto.fi/course/view.php?id=33723
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1. OVERVIEW

Understanding the principles, dynamics, opportunities, complexities, difficulties and risks of international business is practically a must for those aspiring to become managers 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: advancing technology and quick turns in the political environment are the most notable ones. In addition, the Covid-19 pandemic caught many businesses by surprise in 2020 and made the future very difficult to predict.

This course provides a theoretically grounded overview of key issues, opportunities and challenges in global business. We shall assess globalization and the changes in firms' operating environment and analyze the needs to adjust firms' strategies and operations due to these changes. The module covers key concepts and principles of conducting business in the international dimension, including issues in various functions, such as HR and marketing. The roles of politics and regulation are covered, including world trade and regional economic blocs. The premises that various countries provide for companies in terms of competitiveness are analyzed. Ethical, social responsibility considerations and environmental issues are covered.

The purpose of the course is to a) present the most important forces affecting international business today, b) introduce various international and internationalization strategies, and c) present the ways to organize, coordinate and control international activities.

The objectives of the course are to learn the tools and frameworks to analyze global markets, to assess various alternative modes for doing business internationally, and to plan and organize for different business environments.

2. PREREQUISITES

Completed basic studies in Management or Strategy.

3. LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon completing the course, the student will be able to:

- Understand key conceptual and managerial issues in international business and strategy
- Apply conceptual international business frameworks to real business situations
- Analyze information from companies, industries and countries for international business decision-making
- Understand ethical dilemmas faced by firms operating in international dimension
- Develop skills in working in (international) teams as well as presentation skills

4. ASSESSMENT AND GRADING

Course assessment will be based on the following components:

Individual assignments (40%)

- Four reflection papers (40%)

Class participation (15%)

- Class attendance (7%)
- Active participation (7%)
- Course feedback (1%)

Team assignment: a case study presentation (45%)

This course is taught twice per year: once in the Fall, once in the Spring. The responsible teacher in the Spring 2022 class is Professor Ingmar Björkman. The Spring class content may be slightly different from the Fall class content.

Final 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 a final grade for the course. Note that turning in class assignments is considered acknowledgement of guidelines on scholastic honesty and academic integrity (see section 10).

5. ASSIGNMENTS

This course consists of both individual and team assignments. Please find below a detailed description of the assignments.

Individual assignment – article reflection papers (40%)

The readings for the course include six (6) articles. The readings are discussed in class and it is expected that the articles are read before the class. For this assignment, each student writes a reflection paper for four articles (4 reflection papers in total), in which the student a) briefly summarizes the key lessons of the article, and b) based on the student's personal experience and/or expectations of working in an

international business setting reflects on the value and applicability of those lessons. In the paper it is also good to demonstrate critical and analytical thinking by providing possible critique for the paper or applying the findings to a setting that is relevant to the student. In the reflection paper, references also to the textbook, lectures and other material can add value. When there are two articles assigned for a lecture session, students can choose one of the two to write the reflection paper on.

Format: Maximum of 3 pages, font 11, line spacing: 1,0.

Deadline: The assignment must be uploaded to the assignment submission box in MyCourses 24 hours before the lecture for which the article was assigned (see section 8 for specific dates). Late submissions will be penalized by a 50% point reduction.

Evaluation: Maximum number of points for each reflection paper is 10.

Case study assignment in teams (45%)

For the team assignment, students will be divided into teams of 3. The students may propose their own teams before the start of the course, but the final division will be made by the course organizers. The teams will be formed in the first (and second) session. The teams themselves will choose a case company to work on. The topic should be a relevant business or management issue that has a significant international dimension. For instance, the internationalization plan of a startup is a suitable topic, as are the cross-cultural human resource management challenges in a large company. More detailed instructions will be given and discussed in the first session.

For this team assignment, students need to create a PowerPoint presentation in which they report the analysis of their case. It is expected that knowledge from both the lectures and course readings is applied in presenting the analysis and solution suggestion. Presentation is max. 15 minutes, followed by discussion of 15 minutes. Another team will be assigned to provide comments and questions to the presenting team.

Format: PowerPoint slides and a presentation (max. 15 minutes presentation). The number of slides is not limited.

Deadline: October 19th or 21st team presentation online. Slide upload to MyCourses by 13.00 on Monday, October 18th. Late submissions will be penalized by a 50% point reduction.

Evaluation: Maximum number of points for the assignment is 45.

Class attendance and active participation

Class attendance and active participation are considered integral parts of learning. Therefore, regular class session attendance is very much recommended. Students are also expected to be online on time, and they should be prepared to turn on their video during the classes for active participation. As teams for the case assignment are being formed in the first and second session, do make sure you are appropriately registered to the course and indicate commitment by being present in the first session, or in the case of absence, contact the course assistant in advance of the first session.

The practicalities and practices of using Zoom will be discussed in the first session.

6. CHOOSING THE CASE ORGANIZATION

Students will work in teams of 3 to analyze and present a solution suggestion for a company and issue of their choice. The issues must be found and are chosen by the teams – the requirement is that they are relevant business or management issues that have a significant international element or dimension. So, for instance the issues of how to enter a new foreign market, whether to relocate manufacturing into a foreign country, or how to cope with the different legal environment of a foreign country are suitable issues. When choosing the case, it is worth considering the availability of information on the industry and the access to the company information.

7. READINGS

Textbook

A very much recommended reading for the course is *Global Business Today*, 11th or 10th edition, by Charles W. L. Hill and G. Tomas M. Hult, McGraw-Hill, 2020 or 2018, international edition. The lectures will not repeat the content of the book but will provide additional perspectives.

Articles assigned for particular lecture sessions

September 21

William Kerr (2016): Harnessing the Best of Globalization. *MIT Sloan Management Review*, vol. 58, No.1. 10 pages. SMR574. Fall 2016.

September 28

Benjamin Rosa, Philippe Gugler & Alain Verbeke (2020). Regional and global strategies of MNEs: Revisiting Rugman & Verbeke (2004). *Journal of International Business Studies* (published July 2nd 2020). AND

Stephen Kobrin (2017). Bricks and Mortar in a Borderless World: Globalization, the Backlash, and the Multinational Enterprise. *Global Strategy Journal*, 7:159-171. (Wiley online library)

October 5

Robert Grosse (2019). International Trade Policy: A Technical Note. Thunderbird School of Global Management publication TB0567, 17 pages.

October 12

Douglas Quackenbos, Richard Ettenson, Martin Roth and Seigyoung Auh (2016): Does Your Company Have What It Takes to Go Global? *Harvard Business Review*. 5 pages. April 11, 2016.

AND

Peter Williamson, Bin Guo, Eden Yin (2021): When can Chinese competitors catch up? Market and capability ladders and their implication for multinationals. *Business Horizons*. 15 pages. March 14, 2021. BH1104-PDF-ENG

As to reflection paper assignments for September 28 and for October 12, you are to choose one of the two articles and write the paper on it. Yet, it is expected that all articles are read, since they will be discussed in class.

On September 30th we will discuss in class the following case:

Star Alliance in 2020. Gomes-Casseres and Judd. 16 pages. Ivey Publishing. January 2021. W21007.

On October 12th, the additional chapter assigned refers to Ingmar Björkman, Mats Ehrnrooth, Kristiina Mäkelä, Adam Smale, and Jennie Sumelius (2017) Talent management in multinational corporations. In *The Oxford handbook of talent management*. 461-478.

8. SCHEDULE

Session	Date	Topic(s)	Readings	Assignment Due Date
1	Tue 14.09. 13:15 – 16:00	Introduction and course practicalities Discussion on and selection of case companies		
2.	Tue 21.09. 13:15 – 16:00	Global business environment: the elements	Hill & Hult, Ch. 1, 7, 9 Kerr (2016)	Reflection paper 1 due Sep 20 th at 13.00
3.	Thu 23.09. 13:15 – 16:00	Analyzing the business environment abroad <i>Video-only lecture, no Zoom</i>	Hill & Hult, Ch. 2, 3, 4	
4.	Tue 28.09. 13:15 – 16:00	Location and the modes of doing business internationally Global supply chains (Dr. Perttu Kähäri)	Hill & Hult Ch. 8, 12, 13 Rosa et al. (2020) Kobrin (2017)	Reflection paper 2 due Sep 27 th at 13.00
5.	Thu 30.09. 13:15 – 16:00	International partnering Growth through partnering and acquisitions	Hill & Hult, Ch. 15 Case: <i>Star Alliance in 2020.</i>	
6.	Tue 05.10. 13:15 – 16:00	<i>Discussion session with student teams on the progress of the case study</i>	Grosse (2019)	Reflection paper 3 due Oct 4 th at 13.00
7.	Thu 07.10. 13:15 – 16:00	The key function for international business: marketing	Hill & Hult, Ch. 14, 16	
8.	Tue 12.10. 13:15 – 16:00	People Management in Multinational Corporations (Prof. Ingmar Björkman)	Hill & Hult Ch. 17 Björkman et al. (2017) Quackenbos et al. (2016) Williamson et al. (2021)	Reflection paper 4 due Oct 11 th at 13.00
9.	Thu 14.10.	(Reserve day)		
	Tue 19.10. & Thu 21.10. 13:15 – 16:00	Case presentations and discussions Course summary & wrap-up		Team presentations

9. COURSE WORKLOAD

Classroom hours, online	30h
Class preparation	33h
Assignments	97h
Total	160h (6 cr)

10. 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>