

TU-E1010 Advanced Strategic Management (5 cr)

Syllabus, version September 29th, 2022

OVERVIEW

The course introduces students to advanced concepts in strategic management and fosters their skills in strategic thinking, analysis, and decision making. The course focuses on technological and institutional changes that blur industry boundaries, give rise to new methods of competition, render existing business models obsolete, and change the competitive dynamics between firms. The concepts and frameworks discussed in the course help students understand, anticipate and manage such changes. Key themes include industry architecture, platforms, data analytics, organizational forms, and ethics.

This course is for master students who already have strong background knowledge about the field of strategic management through attendance in courses such as TU-C2010 - Introduction to Strategic Management and TU-C2040 - Strategy Fieldwork.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After the course, the participant should have

- 1) strengthened their proficiency in established and contemporary theories in strategic management,
- 2) a deeper understanding of advanced concepts in strategic management,
- 3) improved analytical strategy skills, and
- 4) a deepened understanding of different empirical phenomena in strategic management.

COURSE FORMAT

The course combines interactive lectures and case discussions with individual study of articles and materials linked to weekly cases. The case discussion part of the course can be completed by participating in (i) (synchronous) lecture-style case sessions or (ii) asynchronously by peer-to-peer learning and individual reflection. These two modes of completing the course are referred to as the synchronous track and asynchronous track.

The course combines interactive lectures and case sessions with individual study and reflection. Each week consists of two sessions:

- **Monday sessions** focus on the strategy concepts, frameworks, and theories of the week, as well as their connections with managerial practice. Teaching methods include brief lectures, discussions, and groupwork.
- **Synchronous track: Thursday sessions** focus on the practical applications of the concepts and frameworks introduced on Monday and are usually organized around an in-depth discussion of a case. In Thursday sessions, *students take center stage in the discussions while the instructors act mainly as facilitators.*

- **Asynchronous track: Thursday case discussions** have the same goals as synchronous track case discussion sessions. The students in asynchronous track will be divided in groups for the duration of the course. The case discussion within these groups will take place in Microsoft Teams. The students will read and share their comments, ideas, and follow-up reflections. These contributions will be evaluated for the participation and groupwork grades.

The required preparations for Monday and Thursday sessions are as follows:

- **Monday sessions:** Participants are expected to engage in (small) group and class discussions. Readings will be assigned for each Monday session, but you are not expected to read them before the lecture. It may be helpful to skim through the week's case before class to maximally leverage the lecture discussions for case-solving purposes.
- **Thursday sessions:** Students are expected to engage in groupwork and class discussions (or, alternatively, Teams discussions) about the week's case. Each student should submit a strategy memo on the day prior to class (submissions close at midnight). The memo contains the student's answers to the study questions pertaining to the week's case and their reasoning behind the answers. Please see details below.

Additional information on the asynchronous track

- The asynchronous track substitutes the Thursday session with case discussion and follow-up reflection that will take place online (a Teams channel of ca. six fellow students). You can participate in the discussion at your convenience between the submission deadline of the weekly memo and Monday 10:00 of the next week. There will be no case discussion session on Thursdays for the asynchronous track and this track can be followed without needing to attend the live sessions.
- The last week constitutes an exception to the rule: participation in the strategy game is expected. Students following the asynchronous track can also attend the Monday lecture sessions if they so wish.

TIMETABLE

LECTURES AND IN-CLASS DISCUSSION

Monday sessions take place at 12:15. The lectures are not recorded and cannot be attended online. However, please note that participation on the Monday lectures is voluntary.

Thursday sessions take place at 10:15 (Group 1, except at 9:15 on October 21st), 12:15 (Group 2), or 16:15 (Group 3, only during week 6),¹ depending on the group that you belong to. The duration of all sessions is two lecture hours, except for October 13th (class duration is 3 h).

Readings and cases are published one week before they are covered in class. Specifically, the lecture readings are published on Monday (by midnight) of the week prior to the lecture.

¹ Please note that depending on the number of enrolled students, asynchronous track student teams may be allocated to the earlier time slots for the duration of the strategy game.

Similarly, cases will be published on Thursday (by midnight) of the week before the strategy memo is due.

Strategy memos are due by Wednesday (i.e., the day before the respective session), and submission closes at midnight. We publish memo scores on Tuesday of the week following the deadline to allow you to use the feedback to improve your next memo.

The preliminary schedule is below. Please note that some small changes may still occur.

Week	Date	Topic
1	5.9.	Industry architecture
	8.9.	Case: Value migration in computing
2	12.9.	Platform strategy
	15.9.	Case: DoorDash
3	19.9.	Data, AI and strategy
	22.9.	Case: Noodle.ai
4	26.9.	Alternative forms of organizing
	29.9.	Case: B-Lab
5	03.10.	Ethics, wrongdoing and strategic decision making
	06.10.	Case: TBD
6	10.10.	Competitive dynamics
	13.10.	Strategy game in the mobility services sector

ASSESSMENT AND GRADING

The course points (max. 100) are allocated as follows:

- Individual weekly strategy memos, 60 points (five memos à 12 points)
- Individual class attendance/participation, 12 points
- In-class groupwork, 13 points
- Groupwork assignment (strategy game), 15 points

Grades will be given as follows:

- 0-49 points = 0
- 50-59 points = 1
- 60-69 points = 2

- 70-79 points = 3
- 80-89 points = 4
- 90-100 points = 5

Individual weekly strategy memos

We ask each student to prepare a strategy memo before each Thursday session, except for Week 6, when there is no individual memo to be handed in. The memos are an important tool to help students structure their thinking and learning, and to support students' engagement in-class.

The strategy memos contain the student's answers to the study questions pertaining to Thursday's case. Students are expected to make use of the frameworks, tools, and ideas from the Monday readings and lecture materials as appropriate. Where applicable, also ensure that you have exploited the data in the case exhibits to the extent possible.

Many cases will have a question or two for which you have to make a specific decision recommendation. Your recommendation should be realistic, actionable, and supported by analysis (including numerical where appropriate). You should understand the decision criteria, formulate, and evaluate alternatives using quantitative and qualitative assessments, and choose your recommendation from among the alternatives. You should also understand the assumptions that underlie your recommendation. Finally, your recommendation should consider implementation: who should carry out your suggestions, when, and how.

The key objective is to put the student into the shoes of the protagonist, to formulate an informed opinion on what should be done, and to be prepared to discuss and defend this (whilst remaining open to alternate perspectives).

Strategy memos should not be longer than three pages, excluding references. Please use a 12-point Times New Roman font, single-spaced, and 1-inch (2.54 cm) margins on all sides.

Please refer to each week's detailed instructions on MyCourses.

Individual class participation (synchronous track)

The primary purpose of offering points for attendance/participation is to encourage everyone to join the discussions.

The evaluation of individual in-class participation is based on assessment by course staff. The maximum participation score is 12, and it is calculated as follows.

- 0-10 points: Participation in each Thursday session is worth a maximum of two points. While our presumption is that everyone who participates in a session gets the two points, this is not automatic. We expect that students participate actively in classroom discussions and exercises, and that they have made the appropriate preparations for each class. Failure to take part in the classroom discussions, and other issues such as being late, may lead to getting less than two participation points. The total class participation score is calculated by taking the sum of the five largest class participation scores. *This means that you can miss one Thursday session without penalty on your grade.*
- 10-12 points: Top participation scores are reserved for outstanding contributors to classroom discussions. Please note that this does not require that you are the most

vocal student in the classroom. Rather than counting the number of comments you make, we evaluate the quality of your contributions to classroom discussion across the whole course.

Participation in Monday sessions is voluntary and does not count toward your participation score. However, excellent contributions to the discussions during Monday sessions may be considered as a bonus when evaluating the quality of your classroom contributions (see second bullet point above).

Individual class participation (asynchronous track)

The general principles are as follows. More detailed instructions on this will be provided on a weekly basis.

In the asynchronous track, the learning objective of the case discussion session is achieved through online peer-to-peer discussions. With your asynchronous group (approx. 6 students), you will share a Teams-channel. Each week your case memos are shared with the team members. We will also provide a follow-up reflection task that builds on the weekly assignment. Students are expected to discuss both the weekly assignment as well as its follow-up reflection task.

Your task is to read your peers' case memos, and then write an individual discussion opener shared to the team and engage in discussion of the ideas via the Teams-channel. To avoid unnecessary repetition of ideas, you can also write your comments as an answer to a discussion topic opened by another member of the group. We also expect students to open a discussion thread or comment on the follow-up reflection assignment provided.

When commenting on your peers' memos, we recommend that you adopt a constructive and developmental tone, rather than an exceedingly critical one. You can highlight interesting ideas you encountered, or you can provide feedback and suggestions on some analysis or interpretation of results from your peers. When giving feedback, the purpose is not to find or point out mistakes but provide general clarification or suggestions.

We will evaluate your participation grade from these contributions to the discussion. The evaluation and grading of these assignments are equal to the synchronous track, with maximum of 12 points in total.

In-class groupwork

For the synchronous track students, the in-class groupwork grade is based on groupwork performed during Thursday sessions and on the combined individual class participation of group members. The groupwork is evaluated based on overall quality and on-time performance. The groupwork is assessed by course staff.

For asynchronous track students, the groupwork grade is based on the overall quality of the group's Thursday case discussions in Microsoft Teams.

Groups will be formed after the first Monday session. The practicalities will be discussed on the first lecture.

Groupwork assignment (strategy game)

The Thursday session on Week 6 comprises of a strategy game, a method for simulating competitive dynamics between firms using roleplaying. The intention of the game is to integrate the lessons of prior weeks and learn how roleplaying can be used to support strategy work. The students will need to compile a group presentation prior to the session, make preparations for the gameplay and submit a brief post-game reflection. Detailed instructions will be provided in MyCourses one week prior to the session.

Absences (synchronous)

While we highly encourage you to attend all teaching events, you can miss one Thursday session without penalty. After one missed session, each additional absence costs the student two course points. If a student is missing from a groupwork session, this does not negatively affect the in-class groupwork assessment. Missing class does not excuse students from assignments or change assignment due dates.

Bonus point opportunity

To enable compensation for missed weekly assignments, or improve a memo score that you are not satisfied with, we will make available one extra assignment at the end of the course. The assignment and its deadline will be announced on the last week of the course. This assignment can be returned to compensate for any of the weekly assignments that a student has not returned (grade 0 pts). If the student has returned all assignments, the extra assignment score will replace the lowest assignment score or provide a bonus of up to 2 points, whichever results in a higher overall grade.

INSTRUCTOR AND CONTACT INFORMATION

The course staff consists of assistant professor Jukka Luoma (jukka.luoma@aalto.fi), and postdoctoral researcher Nooa Nykänen (nooa.nykanen@aalto.fi). A course staff member will be available for questions on practical matters (including attendance, absences, assignments, etc.) via the General discussion section of the course's MyCourses page. In student-specific practical matters please send an email to nooa.nykanen@aalto.fi. The course personnel are available for questions on Mondays after the lecture.