

TU-E1010 Advanced Strategic Management (5 cr)

Syllabus, version 7 September 2020

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, sustainability, organizational adaptation, 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 highly 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, mini-cases, and groupwork.
- **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.

Students should come prepared to both Monday and Thursday sessions:

- **Monday sessions:** Students are expected to engage in group and class discussions. Students need to prepare for Monday sessions by reading thoroughly the assigned articles and, where appropriate, by familiarizing themselves with the provided mini-case(s) or watching the assigned videos. This is important to get the most out of the Monday sessions.

- Thursday sessions:** Students are expected to engage in groupwork and class discussions about the day'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 day's case and their reasoning behind the answers. Please see details below.

TIMETABLE

LECTURES AND IN-CLASS DISCUSSION

All sessions take place in Zoom (links will be posted to MyCourses). Monday sessions take place at 12:15. Thursday sessions take place at 10:15 (Group 1, except at 9:15 on 8.10.), 12:15 (Group 2), or 16:15 (Group 3), depending on the group that you belong to. The duration of all sessions is two lecture hours, except for 8.10. when the session lasts for three lecture hours.

Readings and cases are published one week before they are covered in class. Specifically, the pre-lecture readings are published on Monday (by midnight) of the week prior to the lecture. 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. An exception is the memo of Week 5, which is due one week after the respective Thursday session.

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

Week	Date	Topic
1	7.9.	Industry architecture
	10.9.	Case: Toyota
2	14.9.	Platform strategy
	17.9.	Case: StartupValley
3	21.9.	Data analytics and artificial intelligence
	24.9.	Case: Noodle.ai
4	28.9.	Sustainability
	1.10.	Case: Tyson Foods
5	5.10.	Crises and organizational adaptation
	8.10.	Strategy game in the mobility services sector
6	12.10.	Ethics

	15.10.	Case - TBD
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ASSESSMENT AND GRADING

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

- Individual weekly strategy memos, 60 points (six memos à 10 points)
- Individual class attendance/participation, 10 points
 - Possibility of two extra points based on outstanding class participation
- In-class groupwork, 10 points
- Peer evaluation, 10 points (four evaluations à 2.5 points)
- Groupwork assignment (strategy game), 10 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 (with the exception of the memo of Week 5, which is due after the session). 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.

Strategy memos are evaluated by the course personnel on Weeks 1, 2, 5, and 6. The strategy memo grades of Weeks 3 and 4 are primarily based on peer evaluation (see below).

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

Individual class participation

The evaluation of individual in-class participation is based on assessment by course staff. Participation in each session is worth a maximum of one point. While our presumption is that everyone who participates in a session gets the full point, 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 one participation point. The total class participation score is calculated by taking the sum of the ten largest class participation scores. *This means that you can miss two sessions without penalty on your grade.*

We also keep track of individual participation for two purposes. First, if your contributions to the classroom discussions are outstanding, you may earn up to two extra points. Please note, however, that the default number of extra points is zero. Second, your in-class groupwork score is in part based on the aggregate individual-level activity of your group members.

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

In-class groupwork

The in-class groupwork grade is based on groupwork performed in Thursday sessions, as well as the average of the individual class participation grades of group members (see above). The groupwork is evaluated based on overall quality and on-time performance. The groupwork is assessed by course staff.

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

Peer evaluation

Peer evaluation allows you to give feedback to other students and receive comments on your own work. The purpose of peer evaluation is to deepen your learning pertaining to the week's topic and to enhance your skills in giving constructive feedback – a highly useful work-life skill. Each student provides a peer evaluation of four strategy memos in total: two on Week 3 and two on Week 4. To guide the peer evaluations, a grading rubric will be available on MyCourses.

Peer evaluations consist of grading the strategy memo using a point scale and giving written feedback. The peer evaluations done by students are graded on a point scale from 0- 2.5 (by the course staff) based on how constructive, courteous, and actionable they are. The final peer evaluation grade is the sum of the four peer-evaluation grades.

On Weeks 3 and 4, each student's grade for the respective strategy memo is calculated as the mean of the peer evaluations (usually two per student). In cases of large differences between the two peer evaluations, the course personnel will automatically evaluate the

assignment as well. If a student is not satisfied with their grading, they can be in contact with the course personnel. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you feel that you have been treated unfairly or if you have not understood the reasons for your grade. In this case, we request that you prepare a document describing how and why your memo should have been evaluated differently.

Groupwork assignment (strategy game)

The Thursday session on Week 5 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, and make preparations for the gameplay. The groups will be evaluated on the basis of the quality of their presentation as well as on their performance during the simulation. In addition, each student should submit a strategy memo reflecting on the game *after* the session.

Instructions will be provided in MyCourses one week prior to the session.

Absences

While we highly encourage you to attend all teaching events, you can miss two sessions without penalty. After two missed sessions, each additional absence costs the student one course point. 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.

INSTRUCTOR AND CONTACT INFORMATION

The course staff consists of assistant professor Jukka Luoma (jukka.luoma@aalto.fi), post-doctoral researcher Anna Lukkarinen (anna.lukkarinen@aalto.fi), and post-doctoral 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 Zoom on Wednesdays at 11.00-12.00. The link will be posted to MyCourses.