

International Business and Strategy

(26C10000, 6 ECTS)

SYLLABUS

Version (January 7, 2019)

Instructor's contact information	Course information
Name: Rebecca Piekkari E-mail: rebecca.piekkari@aalto.fi Office: Töölö Campus, Main Building Office Hours: upon agreement	Status of the course: Mandatory course of the Strategy specialization, BSc Studies in Management Academic Year, Period: 2018-2019, Period III Location: R001 – U 270 Language of Instruction: English
Co-teacher: Dr. Vinod K. Jain Email: vinod.jain01@yahoo.com	Course Website: https://mycourses.aalto.fi/course/view.php?id=19943
Teaching assistant: Kalliopi Platanou E-mail: Kalliopi.platanou@aalto.fi	

1. OVERVIEW

The course is about the challenges and excitement of doing business internationally. With the overseas activities of multinational corporations (MNCs) accounting for over \$20 trillion in annual revenues, they constitute a significant and increasing component of the world's (and Finland's) economic activity. Finland is highly integrated into the global economy with exports accounting for a third of its GDP (Gross Domestic Product). Therefore, more and more companies are now requiring international expertise of their managers, executives, and board members. Several MNCs, in fact, consider only individuals with significant international experience and expertise for their top management positions.

Not only large and small businesses are subject to the international environment, but also non-governmental organizations operating across national borders, whose work is often closely intertwined with that of business. Understanding the international environment, therefore, is necessary for all engaged in business. Hence, the course is designed to provide you with an introduction to the complexities of operating in a globalizing world as well as how to take advantage of the opportunities it offers.

This is an introductory course on international business and strategy with an emphasis on applying theoretical knowledge and concepts to the challenges currently faced by internationally operating firms. It focuses on developing hands-on skills of operating in the international business environment. The objective of the course is to advance the understanding of various theoretical aspects of international business and strategy and applying it to contemporary real life cases. Students will also have the opportunity to participate in a conflict resolution simulation facilitated by the international NGO, CMI (Crisis Management Initiative).

Topics covered in the course include national and cultural differences, ethics and sustainability in an international context, international business strategy and internationalization process, as well as an overview of some international business functions such as global supply chain management and global human resource management. Upon gaining a comprehensive overview of these topics, students will apply their theoretical knowledge to two real life company cases.

2. PREREQUISITES

Completed basic studies of the Management BSc degree.

3. LEARNING OUTCOMES

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

- Understand a number of theoretical, empirical, and managerial issues in international business and strategy
- Develop the ability to apply theoretical knowledge to real life companies and find possible solutions
- Develop skills to analyze information from real life companies (including, for example, news and reports) and combine it with the theoretical insights obtained during the course
- Understand ethical dilemmas faced by firms operating in a global context
- Develop skills to manage conflict in a global context through a simulation case study
- Learn to write a blog post about their project, thus gaining hands-on skills in communicating their solution in a professional way
- 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:

- Case study in groups: 50%
- Individual assignment (blog post): 25%
- Quizzes: 24% (6 quizzes x 4 points)
- Bonus point for answering the course feedback survey: 1%

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

0-50 points = 0

50-59 points = 1

60-69 points = 2

70-79 points = 3

80-89 points = 4

90-100 points = 5

All assignments have to be returned and a final course 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 9).

The evaluation criteria for each assignment will be discussed during the first session (January 8th).

5. ASSIGNMENTS

This course consists of three assignments. Please find below a detailed description of the assignments.

Case study in groups (50%)

For the group assignment, students will be divided into groups of 4-5 and work on either the international SME or start-up, depending on their preferences. The group formation will be done by the course instructors, but as a team you will have the opportunity to choose the case company. Representatives of the case organizations will have a session on January 8th or 10th, during which they will present a current challenge as well as an overview of their history and operations.

For this group assignment, students need to create a PowerPoint presentation in which they report how the specific organization will be able to solve their challenge. It is also critical to apply knowledge from both the lectures and course readings in presenting the solution.

Format: PowerPoint slides (max. 15 minutes presentation).

Deadline: Presentations in class take place on February 5th (Ruskovilla Switzerland case) and February 12th (Freska case). The deadline for submitting the final PowerPoint slides is **February 18th, 2019 at 4 pm.** Please upload your presentation slides to the respective assignment submission box in MyCourses.

Evaluation: Graded (0-5)

For those who work on the Freska case, the best group will also have the chance to present their solution at the company premises.

Individual assignment – Blog post (25%)

For this assignment, each student writes a blog post about a topical and timely issue in international business and strategy. We do not expect you to create a website where you publish your blog post, but we rather focus on the contents of the blog post and how it resonates with the wider audience. A coaching session for writing blogs will be offered during the course (see detailed schedule below).

Format: 1200 – 1500 words (Font: 12pt Times New Roman; Line spacing: 1,5 lines), include full references to the sources.

Deadline: The assignment has to be uploaded to the assignment submission box in MyCourses by **February, 24th at 6 pm.**

Evaluation: Graded (0-5)

Quizzes (24%)

For Sessions 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, and 8 we will have a quiz with multiple choice questions based on each session's readings. The quizzes will be done individually through the MyCourses platform before class. There will be six quizzes in total which account for four points each. They account for max 24% of the total grade. To do well in the quiz, it is imperative that you study the reading materials for the day prior to coming to class.

6. DESCRIPTION OF THE CASE ORGANIZATIONS

Students will work in groups on the challenges that one of the following international firms faces. Please find below a description of the case companies.

International SME: Ruskovilla Switzerland

Ruskovilla Switzerland is the exclusive distributor of Ruskovilla's products in the Swiss market. Ever since starting in the market in 2015/16, Ruskovilla Switzerland has sought to build its presence in the Swiss market and create awareness among Swiss consumers. Its ecological and organic clothing for adults, kids and babies are quite well-known in its home market in Finland, but in Switzerland the brand building was started almost from scratch. At the moment, the products are being sold in Switzerland through a web-shop (www.ruskovilla.ch), as well as at temporary events such as various markets around Switzerland. Ruskovilla doesn't have any own retail shops, nor are the products available through any other brick-and-mortar shop in Switzerland.

Start-up: Freska

Freska founded in 2015 in Helsinki, Finland and is the leading and fastest growing home services technology company in the Nordics. Freska offers flexible solutions to clients and cleaners and aims to revolutionize the cleaning industry. It also operates in Sweden and Norway and is among the fastest growing startups in the Nordics. (<https://www.freska.fi/>)

7. READINGS

Only selected readings are available on MyCourses. As to all the other readings, you are expected to download them yourself based on the references provided in the schedule. These readings are publicly available, and you can find them easily by searching (in Google) with the article name (please note this works on any Aalto computer, but not elsewhere) or via our university library webpages. Relating to the textbook, there are several copies of the Hill and Hult (2018, 10th edition) book available as coursebooks in the library. An older edition of the textbook is also available in the library and can be used as well.

Textbook:

Hill, C.W.L. and Hult, T.M. (2018), *Global Business Today, 10th Edition*, McGraw-Hill. Referred to in the schedule as Hill & Hult.

Articles:

Garden, M. (2012). Defining blog: A fool's errand or a necessary undertaking. *Journalism*, 13(4), 483–499. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884911421700>

Levy, O., Taylor, S., & Boyacigiller, N. (2010). On the rocky road to strong global culture. *MIT Sloan Management Review*, 51(4).

Markman, A. (2018). 3 Ways to Identify Cultural Differences on a Global Team. *Harvard Business Review Digital Articles*, 2-5.

- Myers, M. B., & Cheung, M. (2008). Sharing global supply chain knowledge. *MIT Sloan Management Review*, 49(4), 67-73.
- Whelan, T., & Fink, C. (2016). The Comprehensive Business Case for Sustainability. *Harvard Business Review Digital Articles*, 2-8.

8. SCHEDULE (PRELIMINARY)

Session	Date	Topic(s)	Readings	Assignment Due Date
1	Tue 08.01 13:00 – 16:00	Introduction and course practicalities Globalization and studying international business Pre-registration for the CMI simulation Introduction to the Ruskovilla Switzerland case: <u>Guest:</u> Minna Schmidt	Hill & Hult, Chapter 1 Markman (2018)	Quiz 1
2	Thu 10.01 13:00 – 16:00	Introduction to the Freska case <u>Guest:</u> Susanna Takkunen and Sebastian Heinrichs, Freska Founder and CEO Organizational culture	Levy, Taylor & Boyacigiller (2010)	Quiz 2
3	Tue 15.01 13:00 – 16:00	CMI Simulation <u>Guest:</u> Dennis Matveev	Hill & Hult, Chapter 2	
4	Thu 17.01 13:00 – 16:00	National cultural differences, ethics and sustainability in an international context	Hill & Hult, Chapters 4 and 5 Whelan & Fink (2016)	Quiz 3
5	Tue 22.01 13:00 – 16:00	Foreign direct investment, international business strategy	Hill & Hult, Chapters 8 and 12	Quiz 4
6	Thu 24.01 13:00 – 16:00	<i>Feedback session to student groups on the progress of the case study</i>		
7	Tue 29.01 13:00 – 16:00	Foreign market entry, global production and supply chains	Hill & Hult, Chapters 13 and 15 Myers & Cheung (2008)	Quiz 5
8	Thu 31.01 13:00 – 16:00	Global human resource management <u>Guest:</u> Kalliopi Platanou	Hill & Hult, Chapter 17	Quiz 6
9	Tue 05.02 13:00 – 16:00	Ruskovilla Switzerland case: group presentations		Group presentations in class
10	Thu 07.02 13:00 – 16:00	Coaching session on blog communication <u>Guest:</u> Pinja Kallis, ProCom	<u>Background reading:</u> Garden (2012)	

Session	Date	Topic(s)	Readings	Assignment Due Date
11	Tue 12.02 13:00 – 16:00	Freska case: group presentations		Group presentations in class
12	Thu 14.02 13:00 – 16:00	Course wrap-up		
				Case study in groups (final PowerPoint file): due 18.02. by 4 pm
				Individual assignment (blog post): due 24.02 by 6 pm

9. COURSE WORKLOAD

Classroom hours	33h
Class preparation	30h
Assignments	97h
Total	160h (6 cry)

10. ETHICAL RULES

Aalto University Code of Academic Integrity and Handling Thereof>

<https://into.aalto.fi/pages/viewpage.action?pageId=3772443>