

UC Santa Barbara, Technology Management
TMP 120 Business Strategy
Section 48207 / 48215 (48363)
Winter 2026 v.1.0.1 (Last updated: 12/8/2025) (Subject to change)

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Office hours: Tuesday, 1-3:00PM in Phelps 2323 - By Appointments ONLY

Sec. 48207: M/W 12:30-1:45PM / Phelps 1410

Sec. 48215/48363: M/W 2:00-3:15PM / Phelps 1410

- TA for both sections: Connor Udolph; Office hours: Fri 10-12PM; 1-3PM

TMP Academic advising: advising@tmp.ucsb.edu (Please reach out for any questions regarding the certificate, future courses and Master's program)

Course Overview

The field of strategy and this course attempt to address the central issue in business: why do some firms outperform other firms? It is evident that there are significant profitability differences between industries and that there are significant profitability differences between firms within industries. Along with diagnosing why some firms outperform others, we will also attempt to answer the key question: what can firms do to develop and maintain superior performance? Overall, we have three key objectives:

- **Building a Robust Foundation in Strategic Management:** We embark on a comprehensive exploration of the fundamental principles of strategic management. You will gain in-depth insights into the pivotal frameworks that shape strategic thinking, equipping you with the tools necessary to understand and analyze strategy. In the first half, we will deal with the foundations of business and corporate strategy. In the second half, we will explore the concept of strategic innovation.
- **Practical Application through Case Studies:** Theoretical understanding finds its true value when applied to real-world scenarios. This course emphasizes hands-on learning through the examination of diverse business cases. You will learn to critically analyze these scenarios, identifying key strategic challenges and opportunities that organizations face. This practical approach aims to sharpen your ability to assess and strategize effectively in real business environments, fostering decision-making under ambiguity.
- **Enhancing Critical Thinking and Communication Skills:** A cornerstone of strategic management is the ability to think critically and communicate your ideas convincingly. This course is designed to nurture these skills. Through engaging class discussions, detailed case analyses, and persuasive presentations, you will refine your ability to articulate and defend strategic recommendations.

Overall, this course offers a dynamic and interactive platform for you to build a strong foundation in strategic management, apply these concepts to real-world cases, and develop skills in critical thinking and communication.

Course Philosophy: At the heart of this course is a fundamental shift from a traditional focus on extensive reading to a more profound emphasis on critical thinking. Echoing the insightful words of Jim March: "Often, we opt for reading over thinking. Reading, as a well-defined activity, offers clear

milestones of progress and completion, and it's a skill most of us are quite adept at. In contrast, thinking requires a more nuanced approach, lacking the straightforward markers that reading provides."

To realign our approach toward strategic thinking, we intentionally limit assigned readings to no more than three articles per session. This restrained reading list is not an invitation for superficial engagement. Instead, it is an encouragement for deeper intellectual involvement. You are expected to thoroughly comprehend each article, not just in isolation but in how they interconnect, forming a cohesive understanding of the broader themes and insights they collectively offer.

This approach requires a deliberate and thoughtful examination of the materials. Your task is to go beyond mere knowledge acquisition from reading; you are to engage rigorously with the content, piecing together the strategic implications and insights. Such an approach is vital for cultivating a genuine competence in the art of strategic thinking. It's about developing an ability to synthesize information, draw meaningful connections, and apply these insights to real-world strategic challenges. This course, therefore, is not just about learning what strategic management is; it's about mastering how to think strategically.

Course Materials

The materials that you need for the course are cases/readings.

(Mandatory) Harvard cases and readings must be purchased from HBS publishing at the following link: <https://hbsp.harvard.edu/import/1292242>

(Optional) Grant. Contemporary strategy analysis. (Amazon: <https://www.amazon.com/Contemporary-Strategy-Analysis-Robert-Grant/dp/1119576431>)

Course Grading

Course grades will be determined as follows:

Class Attendance and Participation	25%
Writing Assignments	20%
Bi-weekly Quizzes (3% each)	15%
Final Exam	20%
Final Project	20%

Description of Requirements

Class Attendance and Participation (25%)

Since discussion and case-method pedagogy are central to this course, your active engagement is essential. You are expected to attend all class sessions. **In order to accommodate personal or other circumstances, you will be allowed one absence during the course for any reason.** If you have an excused absence, you may submit a write-up of the class materials for participation credit. If you miss more than 4 classes, you will be in danger of failing the course and should meet with me to discuss the situation. Please note that you are responsible for the material covered in all class sessions. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to obtain materials, notes, and announcements from your classmates.

Participation will be graded on both quality and quantity, with quality weighed more heavily.

Each class, your contributions will be evaluated. Thoughtful engagement matters more than speaking frequently. High-quality contributions include presenting recommendations supported by case analysis, asking questions that sharpen our focus, making integrative summaries that advance discussion, and drawing linkages to prior concepts and cases. Lower-quality contributions include reciting case facts without developing implications, making comments unrelated to the current discussion, repeating points others have made, or demonstrating lack of preparation. You will receive feedback on your participation after Week 5.

Your comments not only provide an opportunity for you to practice articulating and defending a position -- they also allow others to learn from your perspective and experience. Your participation will be evaluated based on both quantity and quality, with quality weighed more heavily.

Examples of high-quality comments include, but are not limited to:

- Presentation of a recommended course of action supported by a strong analysis of facts/data from the case.
- Thoughtful questioning of others' arguments that sharpens our analysis and focus.
- Integrative summaries of where the discussion has been that add insight and provide direction for further discussion.
- Insightful questions.
- Linkages to concepts, frameworks, and cases from prior class sessions.

Examples of poor-quality comments include, but are not limited to:

- Recitation of case facts without development of the implications of those facts.
- Comments that do not relate to the prior comments/discussion. A great comment at one point becomes a distraction later in the discussion.
- Repeating a point that someone else already made
- Comments that demonstrate a lack of preparation.

In exceptional cases, the participation grade for a given session can be modified up or down depending on your active participation during the session. Particularly insightful comments, which help the whole class better understand a key point of the course, may be rewarded. On the contrary, disruptive behavior or missing class will be penalized.

Writing assignments (20%)

You are required to undertake at least 2 writing assignments (each with ~10% of the overall grade). It can come in the form of an in-depth case analysis related to the mini-case or an essay based on questions imposed in a class. A separate handout will be provided. This task is an individual endeavor and is integral to your overall grade. Your submission should be reflective of your unique perspective and critical thinking skills, drawing extensively on the frameworks, data and insights provided in the case or in the course. Late assignments will not be accepted, and you will receive a mark of 0% for any missing assignments.

Online Bi-weekly Quizzes (15%)

You will be required to complete 5 online “bi-weekly” quizzes (3% each and this will be due roughly about every other week). The quiz questions will be mostly short-answer questions but also contain a long-answer question. The quiz dates are specified in the course schedule below.

Final Exam (20%)

You will be required to complete one closed-book exam (20% of the course grade and 60 minutes will be provided-the exam will be designed for 30 minutes). The handout will be provided and this will be pen and paper exams. No Electronics and no notes allowed. These exams are meant to test your knowledge on materials covered in classes, readings, and cases. The exam questions will contain both short-answer questions and long-answer questions. The exam date is specified in the course schedule below.

Final Project: Strategic Project Planning (20%)

In this group project, you will identify a new product or service to bring to market by a major (and established) company. The product/service should allow the company to extend its existing technologies or capabilities to a market it currently does not compete in.

You will prepare a 10-minute pitch deck (a power-point presentation) explaining the product and service, its intended use and the problem it will solve, and an associated strategy that will lead to business success. The pitch deck should simulate a presentation you would give to your company leaders; your aim is to receive a green-light and funding for your idea. It should involve a lot of good research and integration of knowledge of different businesses. The presentation will be followed by Q&A by audience up to 2 minutes.

More details can be found in [the supplementary document](#) on the final project.

Instruction: The presentation should be submitted via Canvas by Sunday midnight before classes on the week #10. The order of presentation will be randomly selected.

You **MUST** present in all of the final presentation sessions to receive a passing grade for the assignment.

Extra Credit: Empirical Puzzle

The empirical puzzle should be something that violates your (naïve or theoretical) expectation from frameworks we learned in class.

For instance, you could go to a restaurant and observe that cheaper wines are sold by the glass and expensive wines by the bottle. Further, you might observe that if you aggregate the cost of a cheaper bottle of wine (by cumulating the cost per glass) it could be generating a greater percentage margin than the expensive bottle of wine. This violates the expectation that cheaper products have lower margins and higher volumes and the converse is true for more expensive products. The puzzle is why this margin-reversion paradox exists in the market for wines in restaurants. You should explain the phenomenon, lay out why it is a puzzle, and what/how/why it violates your expectation (Max 1/2 Page).

Instruction: E-mail your puzzle to me, and anything submitted by each Friday at 9 PM will be considered for the extra credit (up to 1%) and also discussion for next week's class. Each week, I will pick up two puzzles and ask the students to present their puzzles in the class. We will have a short discussion.

The E-mail subject should include the week# and the section time. For example, "[TMP120/9:30] Empirical Puzzle Week#3" should be the subject. You can submit up to 2 Empirical Puzzles during the course. Submitting doesn't guarantee that you will get full credits.

Final Letter Grades

They will be assigned as follows:

Letter Grade	GPA	Class Points
A	4.00	>= 93.00 %
A-	3.67	>= 90.00 %
B+	3.33	>= 87.00 %
B	3.00	>= 83.00 %
B-	2.67	>= 80.00 %
C+	2.33	>= 77.00 %
C	2.00	>= 70.00 %
Ds and Fs	Below 2.00, at discretion of instructor	

Course Schedule

Week	Class	Date	Topic (Cases / Readings)
Wk#1	1	Mon. 1/5	Introduction and Course Overview <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading: “What is Strategy” (Porter, 1996); (Optional) “Can you say what your strategy is?” (Collis & Rustad, 2008)
	2	Wed. 1/7	Business Strategy: Industry Structure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading: “The Five Competitive Forces that Shape Strategy” (Porter, 2008); (Optional) “Industry Analysis” (Casadesus-Masanell) * Quiz #1 due 1/12
Wk#2	3^*	Mon. 1/12	Business Strategy: Industry Structure (Continued) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Case: Apple Computer (2015)
	4	Wed. 1/14	Business Strategy: Competitive Advantage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading: “Creating Competitive Advantage” (Rivkin & Ghemawat); (Optional) “Leaders (dis)advantage” (Coughlin) * Quiz #2 due 1/21 * Note on Financial Analysis in Strategy
No Class on Mon. 1/19 (Martin Luther King Jr. Day)			
Wk#3	5*	Wed. 1/21	Business Strategy: Integrated Framework <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Case: Trader Joe’s * Final Project Group Formation & In-class meeting * Writing Assignment #1 Due 1/26
	6*	Mon. 1/26	Business Strategy: Resource & Capabilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading: “Competing on Resources” (Collis & Montgomery)
Wk#4	7^	Wed. 1/28	Corporate Strategy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading: “Choosing Corporate and Global Scope:” (Piskorski); A *Participation Check-in & Final Project In-class meeting * Quiz #3 due 2/2
	8*	Mon. 2/2	Guest Speakers on Business Strategy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nitesh Dhingra, Head of AI Enablement at Capital Group Chris Zhao, Head of Global Marketing Analytics at Capital Group
Wk#5	9	Wed. 2/4	Corporate Strategy (Cont.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Case: Disney
	10^	Mon. 2/9	Technological Disruption and Innovation

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading: “Disruptive Technologies: Catching the Wave” (Bower & Christensen)
			* Final Project Checkpoint (Check in with your TA)
			<hr/> Technological Disruption and Innovation (Cont.)
	11	Wed. 2/11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case: Alphabet
			* Writing Assignment #2 Due 2/11
			* Quiz #4 due 2/18
			<hr/> No Class on Mon. 2/16 (President’s Day)
			<hr/> Putting it together: Business and Corporate Strategy
Wk #7	12*	Wed. 2/18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case: The Pinkfong Company
			* Final Project Company/Industry (due before class) & In-class meeting*
			<hr/> Guest Speaker on Corporate Strategy
	13^*	Mon. 2/23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ryan Lee, Co-founder of the Pinkfong Company
			* Writing Assignment #2 Due 2/23
			<hr/> Platform & Networks Effect
Wk#8	14	Wed. 2/25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading: “Strategic Decisions for Multisided Platforms” (Hagiu, 2014); (Optional) “Network Effects Aren’t Enough” (Haigu & Rothman)
			* Quiz #5 due 3/2
			<hr/> Corporate Social Responsibility and Business Ethics
Wk#9	15*	Mon. 3/2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading: “Creating Shared Value” (Porter & Kramer)
			* Final Project Presentation Order & In-class meeting
	16	Wed. 3/4	<hr/> Final Exam
			<hr/> Final Presentations
Wk#10	17*	Mon. 3/9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final Project Presentation / Appendix (Due before class)
			<hr/> Final Presentations
	18	Wed. 3/11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course Wrap-up

* There is an online quiz or an assignment due before class on these dates.

^ These sessions will be case sessions.

Policies and Resources

Additional Materials

Books:

Hill, Schilling & Jones. Strategic Management: Theory & Cases: An Integrated Approach. (Amazon: <https://www.amazon.com/Strategic-Management-Integrated-Approach-MindTap/dp/0357033841>)

Richard Rumelt. Good strategy Bad strategy: The difference and Why it matters. (Amazon: <https://www.amazon.com/Good-Strategy-Bad-Difference-Matters/dp/0307886239>)

Wheelan. Naked Statistics: Stripping the Dread from the Data (Amazon: <https://www.amazon.com/Naked-Statistics-Stripping-Dread-Data/dp/039334777X>)

Newsletters:

Stratechery by Ben Thompson (<https://stratechery.com/>)

Benedict Evans (<https://www.ben-evans.com/>)

For financial assistance with course books and supplies, visit <https://www.sa.ucsb.edu/resources/student-financial-guide/resources/textbooks-and-supplies>.

Classroom Professionalism Policy

Students are expected to be professional in all respects. This means:

- **Students arrive on time.** On time arrival shows respect for both fellow students and faculty and it enhances learning by reducing avoidable distractions.
- **Students display their name cards.** This permits fellow students and faculty to learn names, enhancing opportunities for community building and evaluation of in-class contributions.
- **Students minimize unscheduled personal breaks.** The learning environment improves when disruptions are limited.
- **Students are fully prepared for each class.** Much of the learning in the course takes place during classroom discussions. When students are not prepared, they cannot contribute to the overall learning process. This affects not only the individual, but their peers who count on them, as well.
- **Students respect the views and opinions of their colleagues.** Disagreement and debate are encouraged. Intolerance for the views of others is unacceptable.
- **Electronic gadgets are used for classroom purposes only.** When students are surfing the web, responding to email, instant messaging each other, and otherwise not devoting their full attention to the topic at hand they are doing themselves and their peers a major disservice. Fellow students cannot benefit from the insights of the students who are not engaged.
- **Phones and wireless devices are dark and silent.** We've all heard the annoying ringing in the middle of a meeting. Not only is it not professional, it cuts off the flow of discussion when the search for the offender begins. When a true need to communicate with someone outside of class exists (e.g., for some medical need) please inform the professor prior to class.

Academic Integrity & Plagiarism

Universities are places dedicated to the production of knowledge by people. This happens when people (like you!) bring your ideas together with others. It's important, though, to observe the conventions (formal and informal rules) associated with knowledge production in this process. This is especially true when it comes to creating the kind of written work we'll produce in this class. It's critical to use sources honestly, to indicate when you are drawing on materials from others. There are two concepts important to understand in conjunction with this idea.

First is **plagiarism**, which is a violation of academic integrity and UCSB policies. Plagiarism occurs when a writer deliberately passes off another (including chatGPT)'s words or ideas without acknowledging their source. For example, turning another's work as your own is plagiarism. Plagiarized assignments (including copying of a friend's homework) will receive a grade of 0 and may result in additional disciplinary action.

Second is **misuse of sources**: occasions when a writer does not properly cite a source (including chatGPT), misuses quotations, includes too much of an original source in a paraphrase or summary, or commits similar unintentional violations of academic protocol. If you misuse sources, we will work together on appropriately incorporating and/or citing the sources. Note that some audiences will consider misuse of sources to be plagiarism; for this reason, it is extremely important for you to cite your sources.

Third, **generative AI tools like ChatGPT / Claude / Perplexity / Gemini** can be used for brainstorming ideas and developing draft content for this course; in fact, it is encouraged as long as it improves the quality of your work and does not inhibit or misrepresent your thinking and reasoning. However, it is **not permitted** for you to directly use the quiz questions / project instructions as prompts for these tools.

You should use any generated text as inspiration to produce original work in your own words and writing style. If you do include specific ideas or unique phrases from an AI assistant in your submissions, you must properly attribute them. The ONLY requirement is that if you do use an AI tools to generate text or contents for your writing, please note it in your response by appending the following text: [Partially generated by AI] or [Entirely generated by AI].

The most successful students will use generative AI wisely - to spark creativity, not take shortcuts. These tools are designed to augment your skills, not replace deep thinking and effort. Be strategic when experimenting with them. Verify anything these tools produce, and make sure to infuse ideas with your own perspective. Lean on your own judgment, not just the output of an algorithm.

The key is **balance and integrity**. Make AI assistants collaborate in your learning process, not complete assignments for you. That helps improve abilities that grades cannot fully capture. Let the work you submit drive intellectual growth through developing your unique ideas and communication competencies. Disciplined, ethical AI usage promotes that type of meaningful learning needed for future career success.

Intellectual property

Course materials: All course materials (class lectures and discussions, handouts, examinations, web materials) and the intellectual content of the course itself are protected by United States Federal Copyright Law and the California Civil Code. UC Policy 102.23 expressly prohibits students (and all other persons) from recording lectures or discussions and from distributing or selling course materials without the prior written permission of the instructor. Students are permitted to take notes solely for their own private educational use. Exceptions to accommodate students with disabilities may be granted with appropriate documentation.

Grade appeals

If you have a dispute with your TA (or instructor) over a grade you have received, you have the right to request a review by the professor. Please keep in mind, however, that an appeal will invoke a review of the full assignment and could result in an even lower grade.

Grade appeals must be made to your instructor, in writing, no sooner than 24 hours after the assignment or exam is returned (this is the “cooling off period”), and no later than 4 days after it is returned. Please provide written justification for your appeal and include the homework or exam in question, along with any relevant supplementary information.

Accommodations and Resources for Students

Students with disabilities: If you are a student with a documented disability (registered with the DSP program: 893-2668, www.sa.ucsb.edu/dsp) and would like to arrange accommodations, please contact me via email or after class and I will be happy to discuss arrangements.

Managing Stress Or Safety And How To Get Support:

Students may feel overwhelmed or depressed with coursework, stress and/or other personal challenges. If you find yourself, or another student, in need of support, please do not hesitate to reach out to Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), 24/7 at (805) 893-4411 (24-hour). <http://caps.sa.ucsb.edu/>. An additional confidential campus resources, if you find yourself in need of confidential support, is Campus Advocacy Resources & Education (CARE) 805-893-4613 (24-hour advocacy) 805-893-3778 (general inquiries). <http://wgse.sa.ucsb.edu/care/home>

General Academic Support.

Campus Learning Assistance Services (CLAS) offers instructional groups, drop-in tutoring, writing and ESL services, skills workshops and one-on-one consultations. <http://clas.sa.ucsb.edu/>

Food Security and CalFresh: If you are facing any challenges securing food or housing, and believe this may affect your performance in the class, you are urged to meet with a Food Security and CalFresh Advocate, who is aware of the broad variety of resources that UCSB has to offer (see their drop-in hours at food.ucsb.edu). You are also urged to contact the professor or teaching assistant if you are comfortable doing so. Please visit food.ucsb.edu for additional resources including CalFresh, the AS Food Bank, and more.

Equity and Inclusion Policies

Non-discrimination policy: All students have the right to learn and participate in a classroom environment free of intimidation, harassment, and discrimination based on characteristics such as gender, race, age, sexual orientation, disability, religious or political beliefs and affiliations. I will address

any related issues that surface immediately; please help me to cultivate a positive classroom environment by communicating any concerns that you have.

Gender and Sex Discrimination Policy and Student Support: Under Title IX, university students are protected from harassment and discrimination based on gender and sex. If a student feels uncomfortable or in need of support at any time related to their gender, sex, and/or sexual orientation, please contact your TA and/or course instructor immediately. If a student would like to disclose information related to pronouns, name changes, or identities, we encourage you to do so. UCSB's Resource Center for Sexual and Gender Diversity on the 3rd floor of the Student Resource Building is also available to advocate and be of and support to students (also see link)

Statement on sexual harassment: UCSB does not tolerate sexual harassment/sexual violence, which is prohibited by University policy and state and federal law. The Title IX Compliance and Sexual Harassment Policy Compliance Office (TIX/SHPC) provides assistance in preventing and resolving and investigating complaints of sexual harassment/sexual violence and gender discrimination. (<https://oeosh.ucsb.edu/titleix/>)

Mandatory Reporting: As an instructor, one of my responsibilities is to help create a safe learning environment on our campus. I want to ensure that students feel they can speak to me, but I also want students to be informed that I have a mandatory reporting responsibility related to my role as a professor. I am **required** to share information regarding sexual misconduct or information about a crime that may have occurred on UCSB's campus or in the community. A result of my mandated report will be that students will receive outreach and resources from the campus Title IX office. Students may speak to someone confidentially by contacting CARE (Campus Advocacy, Resources & Education) at the 24/7 advocacy line at (805) 893-4613 or in person at the Student Resource Building.