

## Syllabus

Course Name & Number:	<b>BA 500 Corporate/Competitive Strategy</b>
Quarter	Autumn 2022

**Faculty: Prof. David Tan, PhD**

Email: [davidtan@uw.edu](mailto:davidtan@uw.edu)

Ph: (206) 543-6405

Office: PACCAR 426

Office Hours: By appointment

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**Email and Internet:**

UW Email and Canvas are the official means of communication for this class. Students are expected to read and act upon email in a timely fashion. Students should check their email regularly along with the Announcements section of this course. All instructor correspondence will be sent to your @uw.edu email account.

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## Course Structure and Format

**Readings**

There is no required textbook. Readings consist of a case packet and additional articles, which can be found on Canvas.

**Deliverables**

The primary deliverables in this course consist of a strategic analysis, divided into four parts.

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## Grading Policies

**Submitting Assignments**

Instructions for submitting assignments are included with the assignment descriptions within the Canvas course site. Due dates for all graded work are included in the Course Calendar below, and within the Canvas course.

## **Late Assignments**

Late assignments will have 20% deducted from the graded score (not total possible score) for every hour it is late. Hence, an assignment submitted 1 to 60 minutes after the due time will have 20% deducted. An assignment submitted 61 to 120 minutes after the due time will have 40% deducted, and so on. These deductions are implemented without exception, regardless of the reason an assignment is submitted late. Do not put yourself or team at risk of unforeseen circumstances. Turn assignments with a comfortable margin before the deadline.

## **Grading Procedure**

Assignments in this course are graded using a three-round process. In the first round, all assignments are read without grading. The purpose of this first round is to understand the central claims in the analysis, so that the bigger picture is not lost in assessment of individual points.

In the second round, all assignments are read once more in more detail to assess quality. An assignment is assessed based on its recognition of key points, use of appropriate supporting evidence, and validity of its inference and reasoning.

In the third round, all assignments are read once more in even more detail for the purpose of identifying opportunities for upward point adjustment. In this round, additional credit is awarded for category exemplars, i.e. exceptional analysis of particular points, claims not explicitly made but implied by other aspects of the analysis, and points overlooked in the previous grading. In this round, all possible benefit of the doubt is given.

## **Contributing to Discussion**

In general, the thought experiment that I use when reflecting on a student's added-value to class discussion is to ask whether the class as a whole would have 1) learned more versus less and 2) learned more efficiently versus less efficiently if that person had not been present for a given day's discussion.

At a substantive level, the orientation that students should take when participating in class discussion is an analytical rather than advocacy orientation. The goal should not be to prove any person right or wrong but to make collective progress as a class towards answering questions of fact and logic. For this to work, it is absolutely critical to avoid personal defensiveness or triggering personal defensiveness. Contributing to the collective process of learning can involve asking questions or drawing inferences about facts and logic that help move everyone closer to discovering the key insights from the readings and cases for a particular day's discussion.

In contrast, making statements that clearly contradict or overlook key points in the reading will not only reveal a lack of preparation but hinder the learning process for others. Likewise, making statements that clearly contradict or overlook key points made earlier in class will not only reveal a lack of engagement and attention but hinder the learning process for others. Such instances will be noted and viewed unfavorably when assigning grades.

At a more logistical level, earning credit for contribution to class discussion requires that you be attentive and engaged. Students feel less motivated to speak if they see their classmates are "tuning out" to use electronic devices. This is a serious concern in this class because the level of learning hinges critically on active discussion reflecting a diversity of student perspectives. Speaking in front of classmates can be intimidating, and many students are cautious about speaking up. Whether intentionally or not, tuning out to

use electronic devices sends negative feedback to speakers and promotes disengagement. Being consistently distracted or 'tuned out' with electronic devices for reasons unrelated to class discussion will be viewed unfavorably when grades are assigned.

Finally, earning credit for contribution to class discussion requires that you at least be present in class and have read the required material. Regularly missing class will be viewed unfavorably when assigning grades.

### **Graded Material Overview**

Final grades for the MBA core will be subject to grade distribution guidelines set by the Foster School of Business. The target median for the core is 3.4. This means that half of the grades within a cohort will be above and half will be below 3.4. This guideline is intended to produce an equitable distribution that ensures academic rigor and offers accurate feedback to students regarding their academic performance relative to their peers in the same cohort.

Note that within a distribution-based grading system, it is not very meaningful to refer to "point" totals in absolute terms. There is no predefined mechanical relationship between specific numbers of points and final grades. What is ultimately most meaningful is relative position within a distribution. For each activity, number of points will be standardized into a z-score, which is computed as deviation from the mean, divided by standard deviation. The final score for this course will be based on a weighted average of z-scores across graded activities. This will then be averaged with scores from the other core courses to determine the final grade for the MBA core.

**Assignments in this course will be weighted according to the table below.**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Weight (%)</b>
Contributions to class discussion	15
Assignment 1	10
Assignment 2	30
Assignment 3	35
Assignment 4	10

### **Grade Appeals**

Before initiating a formal grade appeal, be sure to carefully read the individualized feedback on your analysis. Consider whether your concern is addressed by the comments detailed in your feedback document. Also refer to the grading process to be sure your concern is not likely to have been addressed in the upward point adjustment portion of the grading. If, after having done so, you notice a genuine oversight in the grading process, please do the following:

- 1) If you would like your grade on a specific assignment to be reconsidered, compose a memo that explains the reason for requesting further consideration of your work.
  - a) All memos must be submitted within 1 week (7 days) of the original grade being distributed.
  - b) The memo must be no more than 1 page (12-pt font, single-spaced, 1" margins).
  - c) The memo must be emailed to the instructor.
  - d) The memo must point to the specific lines and passages where statements addressing the expectations of the assignment were overlooked in the grading process.
- 2) The assignment will be re-considered in its entirety; grades may be adjusted upward or downward, or remain unaltered.

- 3) All grade appeals must be written; none will be considered during office hours or class time.

Note that you are more likely to be successful in professional settings if you can persuade others logically—rather than emotionally—in a concise and specific manner. Consequently, logically-motivated appeals are most likely to result in more positive evaluations upon further review. Bear in mind that the grade appeal process is designed to provide a corrective mechanism. The process should not be abused, i.e. treated as a lottery ticket.

### **How does the Honor Code apply to my work in this course?**

This course follows the principles and procedures espoused by the University of Washington Student Conduct Code to maintain academic integrity in the course. The Code establishes the expectation that students will practice high standards of professional honesty and integrity. In particular, implementation of the Code at the Foster School of Business prohibits cheating, attempted cheating, and plagiarism—including improper citations of source material—as it pertains to academic work.

If you are unclear about how the Code applies to assignments for this course, please ask for clarification prior to submitting an assignment. All instances of potential violations will be forwarded to the relevant associate dean and handled in compliance with the University of Washington Student Conduct Code as outlined in [Washington Administrative Code 478-121](#). After a case is submitted, no communication will occur between the student and instructor while the case is pending and awaiting the associate dean's investigation and decision.

Specific Applications of the Conduct Code (list not all-inclusive)

- 1) Submitting assignments that reflect uncited work or ideas from others is an act of academic dishonesty.
- 2) Using external sources without properly citing them is an act of academic dishonesty. As a general rule, do not structure your writing in ways that may result in you intentionally or unintentionally receiving credit for someone else's better writing or ideas as a result of unclear delineation.
  - a) Do not use 'lazy' paraphrasing. It is improper to use complete sentences or blocks of text in which there are only minor changes in wording from the original source. Even if the source is cited, lazy paraphrasing without quotation marks makes it unclear what is one's own original writing and what is simply paraphrased from the source. When you do use complete sentences or blocks of text from external sources, you must use quotation marks.
  - b) Do not cite references by only including a list of references at the very end. You must use citations in the text. Moreover, you must use citations in the text for every instance in which ideas or wording from external sources is used, as opposed to only the first use of a source. This, again, is important for delineating your own ideas and writing from external sources.
  - c) For websites, provide the URL of the specific page with the cited material, as opposed to only domain names or high-level sections where the location of the cited material is not apparent.
- 3) Teaching cases (e.g. HBS) are not permitted as external sources.
- 4) If you use any sources that cannot be publicly-accessed via hyperlink, e.g. analyst or market research reports, copies of these reports must be submitted as attachments along with your assignment. As a general rule, avoid using sources that provide analysis, i.e. inferences, reasoning, conclusions. Use external sources for facts, and do your own analysis.
- 5) Do not provide course materials or information about course content to other students who have not yet taken the course or ask for course materials or information about course content from students who have previously taken the course.

**SimCheck**

The University has a license agreement with SimCheck, an educational tool that helps identify plagiarism from Internet resources. In this course, assignments will be submitted electronically and checked by SimCheck. The SimCheck Report will indicate the amount of original text in submitted work and whether material that is quoted, paraphrased, summarized, or used from another source is appropriately referenced.

In addition to SimCheck, manual checks of written assignments will be done at random and when suspicious text is encountered. For instance, 1) noticeable shifts in the tone or quality of writing and 2) sentences or passages that seem to be written for some other purpose besides answering the questions in the assignment will trigger a check of the entire text of an assignment using tools beyond SimCheck.

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## Access and Accommodations

Your experience in this class is important to me. If you have already established accommodations with Disability Resources for Students (DRS), please communicate your approved accommodations to me at your earliest convenience so we can discuss your needs in this course.

If you have not yet established services through DRS, but have a temporary health condition or permanent disability that requires accommodations (conditions include but not limited to; mental health, attention-related, learning, vision, hearing, physical or health impacts), you are welcome to contact DRS at 206-543-8924 or [uwdrs@uw.edu](mailto:uwdrs@uw.edu) or [disability.uw.edu](http://disability.uw.edu). DRS offers resources and coordinates reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities and/or temporary health conditions. Reasonable accommodations are established through an interactive process between you, your instructor(s) and DRS. It is the policy and practice of the University of Washington to create inclusive and accessible learning environments consistent with federal and state law.

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# Religious Accommodations

Washington state law requires that UW develop a policy for accommodation of student absences or significant hardship due to reasons of faith or conscience, or for organized religious activities. The UW's policy, including more information about how to request an accommodation, is available at Religious Accommodations Policy (<https://registrar.washington.edu/staffandfaculty/religious-accommodations-policy/>).

Accommodations must be requested within the first two weeks of this course using the Religious Accommodations Request form (<https://registrar.washington.edu/students/religious-accommodations-request/>).

# Course Calendar

Week	Topic	Day	Date	Activities
1	Introduction	Tue	Sep 20	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Syllabus</li> <li>Assignment instructions</li> </ul> Download course packet
		Thu	Sep 22	
2	Corporate strategy	Tue	Sep 27	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>From competitive advantage to corporate strategy</li> <li>Marvel</li> </ul> Suggested: Watch MCU movies from Iron Man to Endgame (in order)
		Thu	Sep 29	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Predictive Biosciences</li> </ul>
		<b>Sun</b>	<b>Oct 2</b>	<b>Assignment 1</b>
3	Firm strategy I	Tue	Oct 4	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is strategy?</li> <li>Southwest</li> </ul>
		Thu	Oct 6	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You can't be good at everything</li> <li>People Express</li> </ul>
4	Firm strategy II	Tue	Oct 11	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Airborne Express</li> </ul>
		Thu	Oct 13	
5	Competitive forces I	Tue	Oct 18	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Five competitive forces</li> </ul>
		Thu	Oct 20	
		<b>Sun</b>	<b>Oct 23</b>	<b>Assignment 2</b>
6	No class	Tue	Oct 25	
	No class	Thu	Oct 27	
7	Competitive forces II	Tue	Nov 1	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Online pet supply</li> </ul>
		Thu	Nov 3	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cola Wars</li> </ul>
8	Applying strategy analysis I	Tue	Nov 8	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Birchbox case</li> <li>Birchbox, seller of beauty products, steps out from</li> </ul>

				web with a store <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Birchbox store Yelp reviews</li> </ul>
		Thu	Nov 10	
9	Workshop	Tue	Nov 15	
		Thu	Nov 17	
		<b>Sun</b>	<b>Nov 20</b>	<b>Assignment 3</b>
10	Applying strategy analysis II	Tue	Nov 22	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lit Motors</li> </ul>
	No class	Thu	Nov 24	
11	Wrap-up	Mon	Nov 28	
		<b>Fri</b>	<b>Dec 2</b>	<b>Assignment 4</b>

