

BA 501 - Applied Strategy Syllabus

Course Description and Details Winter Quarter 2023

Instructor Details

Russell Walker, Ph.D.
rwalker1@uw.edu

Office Hours: By appointment. Please email me to set up a time.

Course Information

Course Materials: There are no required textbooks or Course Packs for Applied Strategy. Course materials will be available on Canvas.

Course Objectives: This course offers a practical “learning by doing” experience in which students apply concepts, tools, and theories from the MBA curriculum to the complex, unstructured, real-world challenges and opportunities faced by managers. Management draws evidence-based insights from a variety of disciplines. (e.g., accounting, finance, marketing, strategy, etc.) Insights gleaned from your practical application of toolsets and knowledge to business scenarios can generate significant value for stakeholders.

Course Overview: This course is unlike any other in the Foster MBA program in that most of the class sessions should be used to meet with project sponsors, conduct research, or interact with the course instructor. Required sessions are listed on the MBA Core schedule and on the last page of the syllabus.

There will be **two required check-in meetings** with the instructor and program staff. At the first meeting the team will review and discuss the initial project scope with the instructor and/or program staff. The purpose of the second meeting is to discuss the mid-point deck and make sure teams are on track with their projects.

Each team is **required to complete a practice presentation** at least one week prior to the team final presentation. Final presentations will take place at the sponsoring company offices (unless prior arrangements have been made). Please refer to the schedule for further details.

In addition to the limited in-class commitments, we expect that each student will invest **10-15 hours** on average per week interfacing with the project sponsor, working within the team, communicating with the instructor or program staff, or otherwise working on the project.

Method of Instruction: Applied Strategy is purposefully designed to differ from other core courses in the Foster MBA Program experience to support the unique goals of the course. If you approach this course the way that you have successfully approached others in the Foster MBA Program, you will almost surely be disappointed. Responsibility for structuring work on the project and the learning experience shifts substantially to the individual and student teams.

To succeed, you will have to demonstrate both a tolerance for ambiguity in the face of often unstructured challenges, and an inventiveness in assembling resources that is not common to other courses. The essence of the course lies in using your skills, knowledge, and experience to think critically and creatively to achieve organizational objectives as articulated by your sponsoring organization. You should feel free to approach the instructor, the MBA Consulting program staff, and others in your network to help drive the project to a successful conclusion. If you are confused or uncertain, we strongly urge you to ask for help as soon as possible rather than waiting until the last minute. The advice will enable you to both be more successful on the project and potentially learn more that is applicable to your ongoing academic and professional development.

You and your team are expected to work professionally, insightfully, and creatively in completing the project, conducting yourselves with the integrity and respect consistent with the outstanding culture of the Foster MBA Program.

Course Credit: Your performance in the course will ultimately be evaluated by your instructor on a “Credit/No Credit” basis. Your performance will be judged not only on how well the ultimate project deliverables aligns with the sponsoring company goals but also on your investment in the course assignments.

Consideration will be given to the perspectives offered by your sponsor, but the instructor will retain sole responsibility for making the final call on grades.

It is the expectation of the instructor that each participant in the course will demonstrate sufficient competency and mastery of content to earn a “Credit” assessment. However, the instructor will exercise the “No Credit” option if you choose to pursue consistently a path that does not create sufficient value for yourself, your team, or your sponsoring organization.

Your work within the class will be evaluated on several dimensions. Details about each assignment, including instructor expectations regarding content, format, length, etc., will be provided. The relative weighting of each of the evaluation dimensions and the submission mode—team or individual—are given below. If submission requirements are unclear after viewing the assignment, please contact the instructor for clarification.

Prior experience suggests that the final presentation is a critical determinant used by the project sponsors in assessing how well teams met project goals; however, the interim deliverables (assignments) serve two useful purposes. First, interim deliverables serve to facilitate conversations with the instructor and other stakeholders that will allow you to focus your effort. They give those who have a strong interest in your success a better understanding of your project, and they allow the opportunity to provide critical, constructive feedback. Second, deadlines imposed by interim deliverables “force the action” in your project. These targets keep project momentum flowing.

Guidelines for assignments (deliverables) are provided in a way that should impose minimal additional burdens upon your team beyond the completion of the project itself. Guidelines for each deliverable are available on Canvas. Please feel free to contact the instructor if you would like further guidance.

Honor Code & Professional Conduct: The course involves substantial interaction with stakeholders outside the Foster School of Business, and the expectation is that you conduct yourself in the highest professional manner. Previous students have suggested that you will succeed on this dimension to the extent that you treat the project less like a traditional course and more like a job. That is, show up on time and prepared, keep your sponsor and other stakeholders informed, and deliver as promised.

If you conduct any research with third parties in conjunction with the project, you should represent yourselves as a Foster MBA student team working on a class project on behalf of an organizational client. While it is an accepted practice in the market research industry to not disclose the specific identity of your client if doing so would introduce bias into the data you collect, you should be prepared to disclose the fact that you have a client sponsor and the general industry the sponsor operates in.

Please note that this may not be sufficient for all research respondents, and some may choose not to participate in providing research data.

The expectation is to employ the principles and procedures espoused by Foster School of Business MBA Honor Code to maintain academic integrity in the course and project deliverables. While all aspects of the Honor Code apply to the course, the fundamental issue faced in Applied Strategy typically involves proper attribution of source material for the deliverables.

Non-Disclosure Agreements: Because of the special nature of this course, you may be provided access to certain non-public or otherwise confidential information. **You are expected to keep all such information confidential in accord with the goals of your project sponsor.** This extends to all interactions with those outside your team, e.g., do not discuss your project specifics with students on other teams.

Our teams often work with projects or services whose sponsors who are cautious by nature. As a result, you may be asked to sign a Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA) before the sponsor will share important information with you.