



**MGT8803-TSF: CURRENT THINKING IN STRATEGY
SPRING 2007**

**Mondays 8:05 am – 10:55 am
Rm. 436**

Professor Frank T. Rothaermel
E-mail frank.rothaermel@mgt.gatech.edu

Pre-Requisite MGT6125 Strategic Management Theory and Analysis

Required Class Materials

- Finkelstein, S. (2003). *Why smart executives fail: And what you can learn from their mistakes*. Penguin Books.
- Gladwell, M. (2000). *The tipping point. How little things can make a big difference*. Back Bay Books.
- Johnson, S. (2001). *Emergence. The connected lives of ants, brains, cities, and software*. Scribner.
- Diverse journal articles as specified below. All articles are available electronically either through GT library or direct web download.

COURSE OBJECTIVE

Strategic management deals with the question *why some companies are successful while others fail*. This course builds on the core strategic management course (MGT6125) and strives to provide an in-depth and reflective study of current and emerging topics in strategic management. In particular, the course attempts to bridge the gap between rigorous strategy research and managerial practice. This implies that you are not only exposed to the latest thinking in strategic management, but an integral part of this course is to aid in the translation of current strategic thinking into managerial practice.

Format

This course will be taught as seminar. This implies that each student takes an integral part in delivering the subject matter.

Seminar Objectives

1. Each student should develop the skills necessary to critically assess recent contributions to strategic management thinking.
2. Each student should develop the skill of translating strategic management scholarly research and “out of the box” thinking into actionable managerial practice.

Prerequisites

Successful completion of MGT6125. Because this is an MBA seminar, enrollment is restricted to second year MBA students in good standing.

Course Requirements and Grading

This course is a *seminar*. This implies that all students must be thoroughly prepared for each session. This implies studying and analyzing each reading carefully prior to the meeting. The following assignments are required:

1. **(25%).** Each student will serve twice as a **Discussion Leader** for a set of sessions. The session leader’s role will include the following:
 - a. Provide introductory remarks at the beginning of the session. This should entail providing an overview of the topic, without discussing the individual readings in detail. Identify the overall themes in the particular readings, and state how to relate them to managerial practice in general terms.
 - b. Manage the discussion during the session. This includes seeding questions, and involving all participants in the discussion.
 - c. At the end of the session take 10-15 minutes to summarize the session, provide insights into the 3-5 most interesting patterns of thinking and findings that have been encountered by the authors. You also need to identify opportunities for how to translate the readings into actionable managerial practice. Here you need to be much more specific than in your introductory remarks.
 - d. Provide a written summary of the session (1-2 pages typed single-spaced), reflecting on issues highlighted (particularly in points a. and c). The focus is on synthesizing the literature, and on reflecting thoughtful arguments. Circulate summaries prior to next meeting via email.
2. **(15%). Article Discussion.** Each reading will be discussed in depth by one student randomly selected through a lottery. This student should begin by offering a 5-10 minute overview of what was interesting about the reading – not a recap or summary of the

major parts of the reading but an informed, insightful, elucidation of the major themes the author was attempting to develop.

- a. More specifically, the discussion of each reading should center on the
 - i. scope of the research (research question)
 - ii. theoretical motivations
 - iii. research techniques and methodology (sample, data, analysis, etc.)
 - iv. findings and interpretation thereof
 - v. theoretical contribution
 - vi. managerial contribution
 - vii. strength of the readings
 - viii. shortcomings, flaws, etc.
 - ix. translations into and application for managerial practice
3. **(20%). Participation.** Weekly contributions to the overall seminar discussion. Here the emphasis is on quality rather than quantity, on insight rather than summary.
4. **(10%). Student Choices.** At the end of the semester, each student will pick their three favorite readings of the seminar, and explain how they open up avenues for fresh strategic management thinking and managerial practice. In particular, you need to focus on the following questions: *How would you go about translating current strategic management research and thinking into managerial practice? How does reading strategic management research and current thinking reshape the way you will manage?* These readings do not have to be related and may speak to different fields. Each student will take 10 minutes to explain their choices made. Support your presentation discussion with overheads, handouts, etc.
5. **(30%). Research paper.** You are asked to complete a research paper (max 10 pages; excluding references and appendices; 1 ½ line typed) by the last day of class. Each student is asked to give a 10 minute presentation of his/her paper. This research paper shall address the following questions in essay form:
 - a. Looking back at the content of MGT6125 “Strategic Management Theory and Analysis,” which content, theories, frameworks, and materials are most relevant to me as an executive and why?
 - b. Which content, theories, frameworks, and materials based on this course (MGT8803-TSF) are most relevant to me as an executive and why?
 - c. How would your synthesized “strategy tool kit” based on both courses look like? When and how would you apply it?

Course Outline

Session#, Date	Topics
#1 Jan. 8	Introduction Discussion of goals and expectations Assignment of Discussion Leaders , etc.
Jan. 15	Institute holiday
#2 Jan. 22	What is strategic management research? How can it be translated into managerial practice?
#3 Jan. 29	Tipping Point – Part I
#4 Feb. 5	Tipping Point – Part II
#5 Feb. 12	Organizational Learning and Knowledge
#6 Feb. 19	Strategic Alliances and Networks
#7 Feb. 26	Emergence – Part I
#8 March 5	Emergence – Part II
#9 March 12	Technology Strategy
March 19-23	Spring Break
#10 March 26	The Future of the MBA & Business Schools
#11 April 2	Why Smart Executives Fail – Part I
#12 April 9	Why Smart Executives Fail – Part II
#13 April 16	Student Choices
#14 April 23	Paper Presentations. Research Papers due.

Session#2, Jan. 22

What is strategic management research? How can it be translated into managerial practice?

Discussion Leaders:

Benay Sager

Required Readings

1. Barney, J. B. (1991). Firm resources and sustained competitive advantage. *Journal of Management*, **17**: 99-120. [Business Source Premier]
2. Porter, M. E. (1996). What is strategy? *Harvard Business Review*, **Nov.-Dec.**: 61-78. [Business Source Premier]
3. Hoskisson, R. E.; Hitt, M. A.; Wan, W. P., Yiu, D. (1999). Theory and research in strategic management. Swings of a pendulum. *Journal of Management*, **25**: 417-456. [Business Source Premier]

Session#3, Jan. 29

Tipping Point I

Discussion Leaders:

James Jayko, Cristian Orihuela

Required Readings

1. Tipping Point: Introduction – Chp. 3

Session#4, Feb. 5

Tipping Point II

Discussion Leaders:

James Jayko, Cristian Orihuela

Required Readings

2. Tipping Point. Chp.4 – Afterword.

Session#5, Feb. 12

Organizational Learning and Knowledge

Discussion Leaders:

Megan Baker

Required Readings

1. Pisano, G. P., Bohmer, R. M. J., Edmondson, A. C. (2001). Organizational differences in rates of learning: Evidence from the adoption of minimally invasive surgery. *Management Science*, **47**: 752-768. [Business Source Premier]
2. Berman, S. L., Down, J., Hill, C. W. L. (2002). Tacit knowledge as a source of competitive advantage in the National Basketball Association. *Academy of Management Journal*, **45**: 13-31. [Business Source Premier]
3. Rothaermel, F.T., Deeds, D.L. 2004. Exploration and exploitation alliances in biotechnology: A system of new product development. *Strategic Management Journal*, 25 (3): 201-221. [download at: <http://mgt.gatech.edu/directory/rothaermel/publications.html>]

Session#6, Feb. 19

Strategic Alliances and Networks

Discussion Leaders:

Evan Ruff

Required Readings

1. Dyer, J. H., Singh, H. (1998). The relational view: Cooperative strategy and sources of interorganizational competitive advantage. *Academy of Management Review*, **23**: 660-679. [Business Source Premier]
2. Kale, P., Dyer, J. H., Singh, H. (2002). Alliance capability, stock market response, and long-term alliance success: The role of alliance function. *Strategic Management Journal*, **23**: 747-767. [Wiley online through GT library]
3. Rothaermel, F.T., Deeds, D.L. 2006. Alliance type, alliance experience, and alliance management capability in high-technology ventures. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 21 (4): 429-460. [download at: <http://mgt.gatech.edu/directory/rothaermel/publications.html>]

Session#7, Feb. 26

Emergence – Part I

Discussion Leaders:

Richard Jucks, Fawad Khan, Devang Dhaka

Required Readings

1. Emergence, Introduction – page 129

Session#8, March 5

Emergence – Part II

Discussion Leaders:

Richard Jucks, Fawad Khan, Devang Dhaka

Required Readings

2. Emergence, Page 130 – End.

Session#9, March 12

Technology Strategy

Discussion Leaders:

David Madden

Required Readings

1. Henderson, R.M., Clark, K.B. (1990). Architectural innovation: The reconfiguration of existing product technologies and the failure of established firms. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, **35**: 9-30 [Business Source Premier]
2. Hill, C.W.L., Rothaermel, F. T. (2003). The performance of incumbent firms in the face of radical technological innovation. *Academy of Management Review*, **28**: 257-274. [download at: <http://mgt.gatech.edu/directory/rothaermel/publications.html>]
3. Rothaermel, F. T., Hill, C.W.L. (2005). Technological discontinuities and complementary assets: A longitudinal study of industry and firm performance. *Organization Science*, **16**: *in press*. [download at: <http://mgt.gatech.edu/directory/rothaermel/publications.html>]

Session#10, March 26

The Future of the MBA & Business Schools

Discussion Leaders:

Rickard Friberg, Dave Grayson

Required Readings

1. Pfeffer, J., Fong, C.T. (2002). The end of business schools. Less success than meets the eye. *Academy of Management Learning and Education*, **1**: 78-96. [Business Source Premier]
2. Connolly, M. (2003). The end of the MBA as we know it? *Academy of Management Learning and Education*, **2**: 365-367. [Business Source Premier]
3. Pfeffer, J., Fong, C.T. (2003). Assessing business schools: A reply to Connolly. *Academy of Management Learning and Education*, **2**: 368-370. [Business Source Premier]
4. Schmalensee, R. (2006). Where is the “B” in B-Schools? Business Week, November 27. [Business Source Premier]
5. Ghoshal, S. (2005). Bad management theories are destroying good management practices. *Academy of Management Learning and Education*, **4**: 75-91. [Business Source Premier]
6. Pfeffer, J. (2005). Why do bad management theories persist? A comment on Ghoshal. *Academy of Management Learning and Education*, **4**: 96-100. [Business Source Premier]

Session#11, April 2

Why Smart Executives Fail – Part I

Discussion Leaders:

Mikey Mulford, Meredith Baum, Pelham Norville

Required Readings

1. Why Smart Executives Fail. Chps. 1-7

Session#12, April 9

Why Smart Executives Fail – Part II

Discussion Leaders:

Mikey Mulford, Meredith Baum, Pelham Norville

Required Readings

1. Why Smart Executives Fail. Chps. 8-11
2. Maccoby, M. (2000). Narcissistic leaders: The incredible pros, the inevitable cons. *Harvard Business Review*, Jan.-Feb. [Business Source Premier]

Session#13, April 16

Current Thinking in Strategy – Implications for Managerial Practice Students' choices

Each student will pick their three favorite readings of the seminar, and explain how they open up avenues for fresh strategic management thinking and managerial practice. In particular, you need to focus on the following questions: *How would you go about translating current strategic management research and thinking into managerial practice? How does reading research and current thinking reshape the way you will manage?* These articles do not have to be related and may speak to different fields. Each student will take 10 minutes to explain their choices made. Support your presentation discussion with overheads, handouts, etc.

Session#14, April 23

Student paper presentations and discussions.

Research Papers due (in hard copy!).