iMBA 544: Midterm Study Guide

Anything covered in Coursera or Live Sessions is fair game for the exam. That said, this should give you a general idea of what we covered in class.

Module 1. Leading Strategically

1. What role can mission and vision statements play in companies?
   - What makes a good mission statement?
   - Do missions make an positive impact on companies, and when?
   - What is the role of core values (alongside mission and vision)?
2. What are Business Models?
   - Why care about business models?
3. What are the elements of a business model?
   - VARS framework: Value proposition, Activities|resources|capabilities, Realization of value / Revenue model, Scope of the enterprise.
     - Enablers and examples of each component (V-A-R-S).
     - Understand how to apply the VARS framework.
     - How to assess business model viability?
4. Strategic fit, Internal coherence, SWOT framework

Module 2. External Analysis
1. Why and how do we use the PESTEL Framework?
   - What are the PESTEL components?
   - Different layers of a firm's environment
2. What is the Structure-Conduct-Performance paradigm?
   - What are some examples of Industry Structure?
   - What are some examples of Firm Conduct?
   - What are some examples of Performance?
3. Industry Analysis:
   - Why care about industry analysis?
   - What question is Porter's 5 Forces answering?
   - Understand what determines each force's strength: Threat of New Entrants (understand different entry barriers), Rivalry, Substitutes, Buyer bargaining power, Supplier bargaining power, Complementors.
   - How to combine the individual forces into an overall assessment
   - What is the Pivotal force, and why is it useful?
   - What is the sixth force, and how can government be included in industry analysis?
   - What are some pitfalls in using Porter's 5 Forces for industry analysis?
   - Dynamic industry analysis

Module 3. Internal Analysis & Competitive Advantage

1. What effects drive company performance?

2. What is a Competitive Advantage?
3. Understand the roots of heterogeneity (inter-firm differences in performance).
   - Understand EVA.
4. How do firms sustain a Competitive Advantage?
5. What are Activities, Resources, and Capabilities?
   - Understand Activities and value chain
   - Primary and secondary activities
   - Value networks.
   - Identify different tangible and intangible resources.
   - Examples of capabilities.
6. What are the criteria that Activity-sets|Resources|Capabilities must meet to be considered a source of competitive advantage?
   - What are the differences between Value and Rarity?
   - Understand Competitive parity.
   - Understand Competitive advantage.
7. What are the criteria that Activity-sets|Resources|Capabilities have to meet to be considered a source of *sustained* competitive advantage?
   - What are the threats to rarity?
     - What are Isolating mechanisms?
     - Understand differences between causal ambiguity, Complexity, Tacit knowledge, Property rights.
   - Understand the threats to value creation (durability and relevance)
8. Understand how to apply the VRI framework to a company.
9. Understand the concept of core competencies and core rigidities.
   - What are dynamic capabilities?

Module 4. Strategic Positioning and Strategic Renewal
1. What is Strategic Positioning?
2. What is the relationship between EVA and cost and differentiation?
3. What are the differences between the four Generic business strategies?
4. What are the drivers of cost advantage?
5. What are the drivers of differentiation advantage?
6. How does narrow (or broad) focus support a cost advantage or differentiation advantage strategy?
7. When is a company "Stuck in the middle"?
   - Why is this a problem?
8. What are Dual (Integrated) strategies?
   - Why is dual advantage difficult?
   - What does one need to successfully implement a dual advantage strategy
9. Why do companies need to pursue Strategic renewal?
10. What are Dynamic Capabilities?
    - Understand the Dynamic Capabilities Framework: Processes, Positions, Paths.