
Strategy I

Details:	COR1-GB.2103
Term:	Fall 2025
Instructor:	Elena Vidal Branciforte (evb2044@stern.nyu.edu)
Office Hours:	Generally available after class and happy to meet via Zoom

Course Description

This course is centered on one core question that most managers face: “why do some businesses fail while others succeed, and what can I do about mine?”. Students will explore theoretical lenses and frameworks to understand the internal and external drivers of profitability. We will explore through case discussions how managers can better understand the external environment to design strategies that drive returns. We will cover how firms can create and capture value by leveraging their internal competencies, including decisions on scale and scope of operations, in efforts to gain sustained competitive advantage.

Course Objectives

Strategy I is part of a two-part strategy core sequence in the Stern MBA program. As part of this course, we will cover the foundational elements of strategic analysis and formulation.

Required Materials

- Readings: we will rely on several articles from HBS and other sources. You will be able to find our readings on our course website at [NYU Brightspace](#), with direct links to how to access them. Alternatively, I have compiled a [coursepack at HBSP](#) that you are welcome to purchase – note that all readings will be marked as “optional” in the coursepack to give you the option to purchase individual readings you may not find elsewhere, though note that they are required for the class.
- Cases and Simulations: we will be using a set of HBR cases. Please purchase the [case coursepack](#) to access the cases and simulations.

OPTIONAL: If you want a foundational textbook that will carry you through this and other strategy course, you may want to consider getting Melissa Schilling’s “Strategic Management of Technological Innovation” (you can purchase it from [McGraw Hill](#) or other retailers like [Amazon](#)).

Assignments and Grading

Here is a breakdown of the main assignments and the implications they will have on your final grade.

Class engagement	30%
Group project	40%
Group engagement	10%
Case preps	20%

Class Engagement

Attendance, preparation, and contribution during this class are essential. This is a case-based method course, and as such, we learn through our discussion and from each other, as we each bring a different perspective and background to the analyses.

Learning is maximized when every student is actively engaged in the discussions. A few suggestions:

- Read all the assigned materials before class
- Look at the guiding prompts for the cases and readings – this will help guide your thinking
- Try to link the concepts from the readings to the cases
- Consider the main challenges in each case, and force yourself to frame those challenges as questions that need to be answered – this encourages you to think critically and boost your problem-solving skills

When engaging in class, strive to advance the discussion. You can draw from the readings or your own personal and professional experiences. For instance, if your background is in a different industry than the one in the case, what insights from there could advance our understanding in the given case that we may not have gained without that input? Or would the same decisions be made in a different country where you may have lived, and why? Ultimately, the goal is for us to move the discussion along, connecting readings to real-life businesses.

Group Project

You and your study group will work as a strategy consulting team for a company operating in the video streaming industry. Each study group has to choose one company among Disney+, Hulu, Amazon Prime, Max, Paramount, and Apple TV+ (note that Netflix is excluded) to focus their analysis for the term. We will analyze the video streaming industry, the strategic positioning of the company within that industry, and in your role as a strategic consulting team, you will need to provide a strategic briefing with recommendations on 2-3 strategic options for the company to pursue in efforts to remain competitive (or regain competitiveness, if needed). You are expected to submit a written briefing (2-3 pages) prior to the last class, and have a slide deck prepared for a presentation for the last day of class (3-4 slides). All groups will be expected to present and engage in discussion throughout the session. Some groups may be focusing on the same company; if so, you can discuss why you agree or disagree with the path other groups recommend for the company. You can also highlight how your recommended path would address strategic moves proposed by other teams for competing companies. More details on deliverables and sources will be made available through our course site on [Brightspace](#).

Group Engagement

You and your study group will work together as a team. Teams are more than the sum of its parts, and for that to occur, each member needs to be engaged and add to the final outcome. Since the instructor cannot oversee each individual's contribution to the team, I will rely on the teammates' assessments of individual's performance. Each individual will be assessed by their team, and the average of that will account for 10% towards their final grade.

Case Preps

To ensure that you are prepared to come to class, each student has to submit a "strategic post-it note" of the case. This should include a strategic question that the company in the case needs to consider moving forward, 1-2 paragraphs providing evidence and suggesting course frameworks on how the company could/should address it (ideally bringing evidence from the case). You have to rely solely on information from the case and no external sources. We will cover 4 cases, each worth 5% towards your final grade.

Class Schedule

Session	Date	Topic	Assignments
1	T 8/19	What Is Strategy? Value Creation vs. Value Capture	<p>READINGS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Syllabus - HBS: "What Is Strategy?", Porter, M. - HBS: "Creating Competitive Advantage", Ghemawat, P. & Rivkin, J. (pages 1-6) <p>CASE: Tesla, Inc.</p> <p>ASSIGNMENTS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Team charter (if you haven't done this already) - Read instructions for team project
2	R 8/21	External Drivers of Advantage	<p>READINGS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - HBS: "The Five Competitive Forces that Shape Strategy", Porter, M. - (Library) "How Much Does Industry Matter, Really?", McGahan & Porter <p>CASE: Netflix: Will Content Be Enough?</p> <p>ASSIGNMENTS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Team Project: Research phase

3	U 8/24 AM	Internal Drivers of Advantage	<p>READINGS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - HBS: "Creating Competitive Advantage", Ghemawat, P. & Rivkin, J. (pages 7+) - HBS: "Competing on resources", Collis D. & Montgomery, C. - "Dynamic capabilities guide for managers", Teece, D. <p>CASE: Value Champion Simulation</p>
4	U 8/24 PM	Competitive Advantage	<p>READINGS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - HBS: "Creating Competitive Advantage", Ghemawat, P. & Rivkin, J. (pages 7+) - HBS: "Transient Advantage", McGrath, R. - OPTIONAL HBS: "Blue Ocean Strategy" & "Red Ocean Traps" <p>CASE: Trader Joe's</p> <p>ASSIGNMENTS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Team Project: Video Streaming Industry Brief due

5	T 8/26	Industry Evolution and Disruption	<p>READINGS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - HBS: "How Industries Change", McGahan, A. - HBS: "What Is Disruptive Innovation?", Christensen, C., Raynor, M. & McDonald, R. <p>CASE: De Beers: Reverse-Disrupting the Diamond Industry</p> <p>ASSIGNMENTS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Team Project: Industry Brief Feedback due
6	R 8/28	Integrative Case	<p>FINAL GROUP PRESENTATIONS</p> <p>ASSIGNMENTS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consulting Briefing Due - Group Engagement Due

Additional Information

Below you will find some additional useful information regarding our School and University policies.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

We take pride in our well-rounded education and approach our academics with honesty and integrity. Indeed, integrity is critical to all that we do here at NYU Stern. As members of our community, all students agree to abide by the NYU Academic

Integrity Policies as well as the NYU Stern Student Code of Conduct, which includes a commitment to:

- Exercise integrity in all aspects of one's academic work including, but not limited to, the preparation and completion of exams, papers and all other course requirements by not engaging in any method or means that provides an unfair advantage.
- Clearly acknowledge the work and efforts of others when submitting written work as one's own. Ideas, data, direct quotations (which should be designated with quotation marks), paraphrasing, creative expression, or any other incorporation of the work of others should be fully referenced.
- Refrain from behaving in ways that knowingly support, assist, or in any way attempt to enable another person to engage in any violation of the Code of Conduct. Our support also includes reporting any observed violations of this Code of Conduct or other School and University policies that are deemed to adversely affect the NYU Stern community.

STERN CODE OF CONDUCT

The Stern Code of Conduct and Judiciary Process applies to all students enrolled in Stern courses.

For graduate students, information can be found here:

<https://www.stern.nyu.edu/uc/codeofconduct>.

To help ensure the integrity of our learning community, prose assignments you submit to NYU Brightspace will be submitted to Turnitin. Turnitin will compare your submission to a database of prior submissions to Turnitin, current and archived Web pages, periodicals, journals, and publications. Additionally, your document will become part of the Turnitin database.

GENERAL CONDUCT & BEHAVIOR

Students are also expected to maintain and abide by the highest standards of professional conduct and behavior. Please familiarize yourself with [Stern's Policy](#) in Regard to In-Class Behavior & Expectations for [Graduate](#) and [Undergraduate](#) students.

STUDENT ACCESSIBILITY

If you will require academic accommodation of any kind during this course, you must notify me at the beginning of the course and provide a letter from the Moses Center for Student Accessibility (212-998-4980, mosescsa@nyu.edu) verifying your registration and outlining the accommodations they recommend. If you will need to take an exam at the Moses Center for Student Accessibility, you must submit a completed Exam Accommodations Form to them at least one week prior to the scheduled exam time to be guaranteed accommodation. For more information, visit the [CSA website](#).

STUDENT WELLNESS

Our aim is for students to be as successful academically as they can, and to help them overcome any impediments to that. Any student who may be struggling and believes this may affect their performance in this course is urged to contact the Moses Center for Student Accessibility (see also the Student Accessibility section of this syllabus) at 212-998-4980 to discuss academic accommodations. If mental health assistance is needed, call the NYU's 24/7 Wellness Exchange hotline 212-443-9999. Furthermore, please approach me if you feel comfortable doing so. This will enable me to provide relevant resources or referrals. There are also drop-in hours and appointments. Find out more on the [website](#).

Graduate students can also reach out to the Academic Advising team at academicaffairs@stern.nyu.edu if you would like to receive more information or further support.

NAME PRONUNCIATION AND PRONOUNS

NYU Stern students now have the ability to include their pronouns and name pronunciation in Albert. I encourage you to share your name pronunciation and preferred pronouns this way. Please utilize [this link](#) for additional information and to review how to update those on Albert.

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES AND OTHER ABSENCES

NYU's Calendar Policy on Religious Holidays states that members of any religious group may, without penalty, absent themselves from classes when required in compliance with their religious obligations. You must notify me in advance of religious holidays or observances that might coincide with exams, assignments, or class times to schedule mutually acceptable alternatives. Students may also contact religiousaccommodations@nyu.edu for assistance.

NYU Stern is committed to ensuring an equitable educational experience for all students regardless of identity or circumstances and strives to recognize the obligations its students have outside of Stern. Please review all class dates at the start of the semester and review all course requirements to identify any foreseeable conflicts with exams, course assignments, projects, or other items required for participation and attendance. If you are aware of a potential conflict, please contact me as soon as possible to discuss any potential conflicts to determine whether/how they can be accommodated.

LAPTOPS, CELL PHONES & OTHER ELECTRONIC DEVICES

The use of electronic devices (e.g., tablets or laptops), for the purpose of note-taking only, is permitted. However, students should make every effort to avoid distracting their classmates or disrupting the class. This includes ensuring that you are in a location that has low environmental noise so you are able to be heard over the

microphone when you speak, and with minimum distractions in your background video. Silence all notifications on your devices so these do not distract you or others.

INCLUSION STATEMENT

This course strives to support and cultivate diversity of thought, perspectives, and experiences. The intent is to present materials and activities that will challenge your current perspectives with a goal of understanding how others might see situations differently. By participating in this course, it is the expectation that everyone commits to making this an inclusive learning environment for all.