

Course Syllabus

ISyE 4801 – Business Essentials for IE's

Fall 2026

Course Overview

This course is for IE juniors and seniors who are interested in extending the value of their ISyE skills set via introductory exposure to several business school topics. The course strives to better prepare students to pragmatically apply what they have learned in the ISyE program to the business setting. Those who desire a professional role where fluency in the language of business is important should find this course useful.

This class will meet weekly for fifty minutes on Wednesday's at 11am ET. The course will consist of a series of class lectures, case examples, class group discussion, and one guest lecture. There will be one end of semester quiz and two team based case study projects over the course of the semester.

By the end of this course, successful students will have an expanded exposure to business centric tools, techniques, and frameworks that will allow them to -

- more effectively assimilate into the professional workplace,
- engage in a more compelling job interview, and
- more rapidly provide value to their future employer

In addition, for those that have not yet taken senior design, this course will provide foundational knowledge that will enhance your value and effectiveness as a team member.

Topics Covered

This course will cover a variety of business centric topics to include the following:

1. Core Competencies and Competitive Advantage
 - How companies position themselves to compete and win
 - Differentiating vs. commodity
 - Competitive forces
 - Strategic frameworks
 - Strategic assessment tools
2. Designing Business Solutions
 - Optimal versus pragmatic
 - The principle of diminishing returns
 - Decision making at risk
 - Business case for action
 - The emerging role of AI
 - Financial evaluation
3. Organizational Change Management
 - Change behaviors
 - Change assessment
 - Change strategies & tactics
 - The role of communications

Meetings & Course Outline

This class will meet on Wednesday's from 11am to 11:50am ET in **room xxx**. During our meetings we will address the following -

- Review and discuss course materials for the purpose of communicating key concepts and techniques
- Discuss applicable case studies and real-world examples to help further illustrate concepts
- Discuss formal class assignments and address student questions.

A draft outline of the course is provided in the table below.

Meeting Date	Objectives	Activity
1. Aug 26, 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish alignment on class expectations and areas of focus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductions & expectations • Review of course syllabus & outline • Discuss planned topics & areas of interest • Lecture – why do businesses exist?
2. Sept 2, 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an understanding of how companies configure their business to win 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lecture – business strategy frameworks and how companies establish competitive advantage • Discussion of Porter's Generic Strategies model
3. Sept 9, 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an understanding of competitive assessment techniques 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lecture – Porter's Five Forces Model and how to apply to industry competitive analysis
4. Sept 16, 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an understanding of what is a core competency and how businesses leverage these to win in the marketplace 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lecture – the concept of core competencies and how companies leverage these to establish competitive advantage
5. Sept 23, 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn how to develop a SWOT analysis to evaluate investments in core competencies and competitive advantage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lecture – complete discussion of core competencies and introduce the concept and use of SWOT analysis
6. Sept 30, 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in development of an example SWOT analysis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group Activity – prepare a SWOT analysis to assist in making a strategic business decision
7. Oct 7, 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exercise core competency, competitive advantage, and SWOT concepts via a structured case study 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Case Study #1 team assignment
8. Oct 14, 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educate students on the concepts of diminishing returns, pragmatism, transition tactics, and complexity • Explore how these impact solution design 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lecture – designing business solutions for success
9. Oct 21, 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce students to the role and structure of a business case for action 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lecture – the role of the business case in driving business action & change
10. Oct 28, 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exercise core competency and competitive advantage concepts via a structured case study 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group Activity – Case Study #1 discussion

11. Nov 4, 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce the concept of organizational change management and the relationship to business performance • Exercise organizational change management concepts via a structured case study discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lecture – organizational change dynamics • Review Case Study #2 team assignment
12. Nov 11, 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administer end of semester quiz 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End of Semester Quiz
13. Nov 18, 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exercise organizational change management concepts via a structured case study discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group Activity – Case Study #2 discussion
14. Dec 2, 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand student understanding of the role of AI technology in business today and consider the impact of potential future trends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guest Speaker – Joe Depa

Office Hours

If a student seeks to meet with me outside the classroom, I will maintain weekly office hours on Wednesday's from 1:15pm to 2:15pm. My office location is ISyE Main Building 336. To provide flexibility for individual needs, meetings can be held in my office or virtually using Zoom.

Please make an advance appointment for the purpose of meeting. You can communicate with me via e-mail at mtrebuchon3@gatech.edu to arrange for an appointment.

The Instructor

Moe Trebuchon is currently serving as an Executive in Residence in the ISyE school. Moe is a Georgia Tech IE graduate who springboarded his college degree into a 28 year career in management consulting, which included Partner roles with PwC Consulting and IBM Global Business Services. Moe built his early career delivering consulting services to clients in the supply chain management arena. In the second half of his career, he moved into broader leadership positions in which at various times he was responsible North America-wide for the supply chain management, retail industry, and big data & analytics business units. He has served a broad array of clients with a deep specialty in the retail and consumer space. A few examples of clients served include Walmart, Home Depot, Macy's, Belk, Lowe's, Kohl's, and LL Bean. This course will draw heavily on Moe's direct business experience along with his network of contacts.

Grading

The grades in this course will be based on the following criteria.

- 40% - Quality of classroom participation via attendance and contribution to group discussion
- 25% - Case Study #1 Write-up
- 15% - Case Study #2 Write-up
- 20% - End of Semester Quiz

For the case studies and quiz, grades will be assigned to students based on a 100 point scale as follows.

- 90 to 100 - "A"
- 80 to <90 - "B"

- 70 to <80 – “C”
- 65 to <70 – “D”
- <65 – “F”

In addition, students will receive a participation score at the end of the semester using this same grading scale. Students with perfect attendance will receive a “100”, those with one absence a “95”, those with two absences a “90”, those with three absences an “85”, etc. The instructor reserves the right to adjust a student’s participation score up or down by 5 points based on a qualitative assessment of the student’s level of engagement.

Please note that the first class meeting will not count towards your participation score. In addition, excused absences will not count against your participation score. To secure an excused absence, the student must notify the instructor in advance of the occurrence. Examples of excused absences include travel for Georgia Tech business (documentation to be provided by the Registrar’s office), illness with accompanying documentation from a physician or Georgia Tech, or death in the family (with documentation provided by the Dean of Student’s office). Other reasons for absence such as participation in job interviews or conferences will not be treated as excused but, if formally documented and communicated to the instructor in advance, may be given final grade consideration at the instructor’s discretion.

If a student is absent from class due to illness, you are expected to participate in the live class remotely or view a recording of the live class session by the end of the following Monday to receive participation credit for that session. Students that fail to notify the instructor in advance of an absence due to illness will forfeit the opportunity to receive participation credit for that session.

To be clear, this course is designed for in-person learning. Students that choose to participate remotely rather than in person for convenience reasons will be considered absent from class.

Your final grade in the class will be determined by applying the prescribed weighting to your score earned in each of the criteria outlined above.

Course Materials

Course lecture and reference materials will be provided to the students via information posted on the class Canvas site. In addition, you will be provided links to access two (2) case studies from the Harvard Business Publishing site. These case studies will require you to pay a small access fee.

Late Submission Policy

If you need to miss a deadline due to a conflict, the instructor must be made aware **via email** of the conflict AT LEAST 3 days prior to the deadline. Proper documentation of reason (conflict) for missing a deadline **must be provided** to the instructor. Missed submissions cannot be made up without proper documentation. If you miss a deadline without approval, you will receive a grade of “0” for that assignment. Examples of conflicts that will be approved for late submission include travel for Georgia Tech business (documentation should be provided from the Registrar’s office), doctor’s documentation of illness or death in the family (the Dean of Student’s Office has a process to verify information and send to all your professors).

Honor Code

Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated in this course. Any assistance on submitted work product from any source (including generative AI tools) other than you or assigned teammates must be referenced in your report. In this course, the use of Generative AI tools (such as Microsoft Copilot) is encouraged as

part of your learning and creative process. These tools can support brainstorming, revising drafts, exploring alternative perspectives, and practicing communication with emerging technologies. However, responsible use is expected.

All submitted work must include a brief AI Usage Statement outlining:

- Which tools were used
- When they were used
- How the AI output informed or shaped your final submission

You are expected to critically engage with any AI-generated content and ensure your final work reflects your own understanding and academic voice. Generative AI should never be used to fabricate data, cite non-existent sources, or bypass learning objectives. Use of Generative AI must comply with Georgia Tech's Honor Code and academic integrity guidelines.

Accordingly, the Georgia Tech Honor Code as linked below will be strictly enforced in this class.

<http://www.policylibrary.gatech.edu/student-affairs/academic-honor-code>

It is each student's responsibility to understand and abide by the Honor Code as it applies to each class activity. Failure to adhere to any of these requirements constitutes a violation of the Honor Code; other situations are also at the discretion of the instructor.

To protect the honest majority, cheating of any kind, big or small, will be penalized by a "0" in the assignment in which the incident happened and the student will be referred to the Dean of Students for disciplinary action. If there is any question as to whether an activity is or is not permissible (in this class) under the Honor Code, consult the instructor prior to undertaking the activity.

Accommodation for Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with learning needs that require special accommodation, contact the Office of Disability Services at (404) 894-2563 or <http://disabilityservices.gatech.edu/>, as soon as possible, to make an appointment to discuss your special needs and to obtain an accommodations letter. Please also e-mail me as soon as possible to set up a time to discuss your learning needs. Requests for accommodation should be made well in advance of the time that the accommodation is required and presented to the instructor via a Course Accessibility Letter provided to the student by the Office of Disability Services.