

**MGT 6164 - Corporate Strategy
Fall 2026**

Instructor: Aleks Rebeka, PhD

Office Hours:
TBD

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Canvas: gatech.instructure.com

Class Meeting: Scheller 224
MW 3:30pm-4:45pm ET

Course Description

In this course, you will integrate knowledge from different functional areas and evaluate strategic decisions in a corporate context. While business strategy is concerned with creating competitive advantage in a particular market, corporate strategy is fundamentally about value creation and destruction when companies *change their scope*; in other words, they *change a portfolio of businesses* in which they operate. You will learn a set of tools that help managers make better corporate-level decisions addressing diversification, vertical integration, acquisitions and alliances, innovation, and response to disruptive change. You will develop an intuitive, yet analytical way to think about corporate strategic decisions through case study discussions, team research projects, and other individual and group assignments.

Course structure

The course is structured around four major themes. First, we will review business strategy concepts and consider how companies should act as their established markets evolve and companies explore opportunities to expand their business into new products and markets. Here we will address the issues of competitive dynamics and industry evolution. Second, we will dive into the basic principles of corporate advantage, addressing questions of where to compete and how to manage a portfolio of businesses. We will learn key concepts of diversification, vertical integration, and modes of entry. Third, we will consider the role of identity and purpose in corporate strategy, as organizations make business decisions while being part of the social and environmental ecosystems. And finally, we will explicitly address issues of a disruptive change as this is one of the key challenges for established organizations.

Student Learning Objectives

The goal of the course is to provide you with the knowledge necessary to understand and evaluate corporate strategic decisions. The skills that you develop in this course will be vital to those pursuing careers as consultants and managers as well as to those pursuing careers in finance, marketing, or entrepreneurship.

In addition, we will focus on developing the judgment and practical skills necessary to apply these concepts in a business context. Over the course of the semester, you will develop **business research skills** by understanding what kind of data you need to answer a particular strategic question, and by learning how to source good data and how to present these data to others in order to make a compelling argument. You will also work on your **analytical reasoning skills** by applying the concepts we will study to business problems through case analysis, research projects, and other assignments. You will consistently be pushed to be rigorously logical in your arguments: state your assumptions, provide

evidence for your beliefs, and articulate your decision criteria. Another key aspect of analytical reasoning and critical thinking is to know what questions to ask. You will also be expected to develop your **communication skills** by learning to present ideas concisely and persuasively to your audience (in class or through assignments). For each class discussion, you should be prepared to articulate well-reasoned positions and advocate a point of view using evidence from the reading. Be it a homework assignment or team project, you will be required to integrate the aforementioned skills through independent research and analysis, collaboration and a presentation in class discussions. These general-purpose skills are vital to pursuing careers in many diverse fields, such as business, public policy, law, and many others.

Course Material

Course packets consist of **required readings** and are available for purchase via the following link:

TBD

One additional case will be provided on Canvas. We will also rely on Wall Street Journal and New York Times among other reputable media outlets. As a Georgia Tech student, you have digital access to both newspapers. Please sign up so they are readily available to you when needed.

Additional readings and podcasts will be recommended throughout the course.

There is *no required textbook* but having access to a Strategic Management textbook could be useful. You already may have access to ‘Strategic Management’ by Frank T. Rothaermel.

Grading

Evaluation Components	Contribution to Final Grade
<i>Individual components</i>	
Conversation (in groups of 2-3)	10%
Contribution to class discussion	15%
Midterm	15%
Final exam	20%
Project knowledge demonstration	8%
Peer evaluations	5%
Miscellaneous	3%
<i>Group component</i>	
Team project reports (3)	15%
Team presentation	9%

There are no make-up assignments nor are there any extra credit assignments available. The deadlines for submissions are strict, so plan ahead. If an assignment is submitted within 24 hours from the deadline, it will be accepted without grade penalty. If an assignment is submitted after 24 hours from the deadline but within 48 hours, it will still be accepted but the grade will be reduced by a letter grade. After 48 hours, the assignment will not be accepted. **You must upload your documents on Canvas before deadline. I will not accept emailed submissions.**

All requests for re-grading must be submitted in writing within one week of the receipt of the grade. The request must include a written explanation of why you believe the grade to be in error. Upon any re-grade request, the entire assignment is re-graded – as such, your grade can go up or down after re-grading.

Grades for each component are determined following the guidelines below.

Contribution to class discussion (15%)

Builds skills: Analytical reasoning, critical thinking, and verbal communication.

MGT 6164 is a discussion-based course. As such, the preparation and engagement of every student contributes to the overall success of the class. Your contributions will be graded on *quality* of discussion, subject to a minimum quantity. The quality of students' comments consists of (1) the clarity and coherence of students' arguments; (2) the ability to support claims with evidence from the material; (3) the ability to listen actively and build on the group discussion. You should be prepared to lead off the discussion at the beginning of class, as well as to discuss salient issues that may not be addressed in the assigned questions. Frequent comments that add little to the discussion or demonstrate a lack of familiarity with relevant course material will not be evaluated favorably.

Both the instructor and students are expected to maintain a classroom environment that is open, inclusive, accessible, and non-discriminatory on the basis of race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, etc. Our class will be highly collaborative, and in order to facilitate the mastery of course materials, all those who participate in our class's physical and virtual spaces will be asked to maintain an environment of respect, empathy, and attentive, observant communication. Tardiness, inattention, or disrespectful behavior will affect your contribution record.

If you find joining in the discussion particularly difficult, please schedule a meeting with me to discuss strategies to improve. There are multiple ways to make a meaningful contribution to the discussion. **The key is to be able to connect information from cases with the concepts and frameworks introduced in theory sessions or connect new concepts with the ones introduced earlier.** In addition to this, The McGraw Center for Teaching and Learning at Princeton University

(<https://mcgraw.princeton.edu/participating-in-class>) has additional wonderful tips on how to make a valuable contribution:

- *“Explicitly relate or link your observations and comments to course objectives, central themes and main topics.*
- *Ask a question that encourages someone to clarify or elaborate on a comment.*
- *Make a comment linking two people's contributions.*
- *Explain that you found another person's ideas interesting or useful and describe why.*
- *Build on what someone else has said. Be explicit about the way you are extending the other person's thoughts.*
- *Paraphrase a point someone has already made and build on it.*
- *Summarize several people's contributions, taking into account a recurring theme in the discussion. "It seems we have heard variations on two main points of view; on the one hand..."*
- *Find a way to express appreciation for the insights you have gained from the discussion. Be specific about what it was that helped you understand something better.*
- *Disagree with someone in a respectful and constructive way. You might reflect the comment back to the speaker to indicate that you have listened well. If possible, point out what is interesting or compelling in someone's comment before explaining why and how you disagree.”* (directly sourced from The McGraw Center for Teaching and Learning, Princeton University)

Evaluation of your contributions is done in each class – there are ~21 sessions in which you will have an opportunity to contribute. Students' final class contribution grades will fall under one of four descriptions:

- **Outstanding (100%):** To receive 100%, your contributions need to reflect exceptional preparation and yield major insights in over 90% of sessions.
- **Excellent (A):** In theory sessions, insightful observations are made, questions that help provide an additional perspective to the class are asked, and tough ad-hoc questions are attempted. In case discussions, comments are based on the synthesis of case information and theoretical material. A student has also demonstrated an exceptional ability to listen to and hear what other people have to say.
- **Good (B):** Contributions reflect preparation and provide good insights into the topic under discussion. There is an attempt to synthesize case information and theoretical material or an attempt to connect new theoretical material with the material covered earlier. A student has also demonstrated an ability to listen to and hear what other people have to say.
- **Below average (C):** Comments only invoke case facts or common sense or background knowledge but there is no attempt to integrate it with theoretical concepts.
- **Poor/counterproductive (D):** Comments demonstrate lack of preparation or respect for others, and/or are irrelevant and distract the class from the discussion. Little to no contributions to the class discussion provides no adequate basis for evaluation.
- **No-show (F)**

Each theoretical and case discussion session is guided by questions that are given to you in advance. You are required to prepare answers to these questions and be ready to provide them in class. Given the highly interactive nature of this class, there will also be a lot of ad-hoc questions. I will use a mixed approach in seeking student answers. I will often wait for volunteers, but there will also be a substantial amount of cold-calling. I recommend that you always be prepared and stay engaged in the class discussion.

Attendance is required for all course sessions. You are expected to attend all class sessions. Because contribution to class discussion is evaluated in each session, missing a class means not having any points for contribution in that class. That means that you get zero for that particular session. If you miss too many classes, you will see your grade slip into "F" zone that spans from 0 to 59%. Please note that if you are present in class sessions but do not contribute, your grade will not exceed 65% (D equivalent).

Midterm exam (15%)

Builds skills: Analytical reasoning, critical thinking, concept mapping and application

The midterm is meant to evaluate your knowledge of theoretical concepts and frameworks and their applications to cases that precede the midterm day. You must read all required materials as we go along. The knowledge of concepts and frameworks is constantly evaluated in class discussion as well. The midterm will include questions of a different kind, such as True/False statements, multiple choice questions, open ended questions, mini-scenario analyses, etc. Practice closed-ended questions will be provided.

Final exam (20%)

Builds skills: Analytical reasoning, critical thinking, concept mapping and application

The final exam is cumulative for the theoretical material. It is meant to evaluate your knowledge of all theoretical concepts and frameworks covered in the class. The final exam will include theoretical questions, questions on cases discussed during the semester, and questions on new mini-case(s) provided

during the exam. The types of questions are similar to those on the midterm exam. Practice questions will be provided.

Conversation (10%)

Builds skills: Business research, analytical reasoning, verbal communication, persuasion and dialogue.

You will do this assignment with me in real time in a group of 2 or 3. The objective is to practice having a casual conversation about a corporate strategic move with other people. The ability to have an informed and thoughtful conversation about a business event will be crucial in your work life, whether you are interviewing for a job or internship or having a coffee with a colleague or your manager. The assignment was originally inspired by “After Hours” podcast hosted by Harvard Business School professors Youngme Moon, Felix Oberholzer-Gee, and Mihir Desai (on hiatus since 2024). You can listen to their past episodes to get an idea of how this works.

A detailed prompt will be posted on Canvas. You will be evaluated on the following aspects:

- Background research (evident in how the events are discussed; attribution to original sources when needed)
- Application of business strategy and corporate strategy frameworks (already covered in class)
- Preparedness
- A personal take on the event, supported by evidence and proper argumentation
- Answering and asking colleagues’ questions
- Response to colleagues’ point of view

Team research project (37%)

Build skills: Business research, analytical reasoning, critical thinking, written and verbal communication, team collaboration and problem solving

This project provides you with an opportunity to apply concepts and frameworks discussed in class to a company in real time. You and your team members will act as an independent intelligence team that has been hired by a client (e.g., a company’s CEO or an investor or a competitor). While industry insiders are typically your presumed audience, all deliverables should be developed in such a way that people who don’t have industry knowledge can understand. Your team will need to conduct rigorous research to gather both qualitative and quantitative data to support your analysis and insights.

Team Assignments. Teamwork is likely to be exceptionally important in your career. As such, one of the goals of this project is to practice working collaboratively, obtaining better results by drawing on everyone’s knowledge and experience, and building working relationships despite differences in opinions and priorities. Each team will consist of 5-6 members (depending on how many students we will have in a section). There is a deadline for you to pick your teammates. After the deadline, I will randomly assign remaining students to teams that still have open slots.

A company to study. This semester we will study **TBD**.

Conducting Research. A company website should be your starting point – to learn what the company is and what products/services it offers. You should search for news media and industry trade publications. Company documents filed with the SEC as well as resources for investors (e.g. earnings calls, investor presentations) will provide you with more information. Should an opportunity arise, another excellent source of information is interviewing company representatives and industry experts. Make sure to prepare for any conversation you have by searching through publicly available information beforehand.

Use the Internet wisely. You should be aware that the information that is posted on the Internet varies widely in validity and quality. You will be evaluated on your ability to discern credible sources of information. It would be wise to stick with information posted by the firms, relevant organizations (e.g. industry associations, government websites, etc.), established news or media firms (e.g. New York Times, Wall Street Journal, Reuters, Seeking Alpha), and business research firms. Blogs usually are not credible, except for some industry specific blogs (e.g., CNET or Car and Driver). If you are using an LLM to assist you in finding information, you need to verify EVERY piece of information and its source, because LLMs make mistakes and hallucinate.

Do not search for and use any existing analyses of your company and do not ask an LLM to do the analysis for you – your grade will be substantially reduced if you don't conduct your own analysis. Failure to acknowledge the use of someone else's analysis (including the one done by an LLM) is considered cheating and a violation of the Honor code.

Keep a list of reference sources so that you can properly attribute all research. You will never be penalized for relying on expert work if it is fully attributed to the author, but trying to pass off someone else's work as your own is a serious violation. I take the Georgia Tech Honor Code very seriously. You must cite your sources throughout your report (we will use full citation footnotes). The full citation includes the author, title, publication source, page number (if applicable), the date it was published, a URL and the date you accessed the resource. Do not include a URL for materials taken from databases as it will not work; instead, provide a full description of the report and the database it was accessed from. If your research includes information from primary sources (such as industry experts, association representatives, company representatives), provide a reference to the name, title and affiliation of the person you have spoken to. If you speak to anyone on the phone, you must keep conversation notes and be ready to provide them to me upon request.

Division of labor and assessments. The team project includes components that are graded at a group and individual level. For the 4 assignments (3 reports and a presentation), you will all receive the same grade. However, if peer evaluations reveal significant imbalance in work distribution, individual grades will be adjusted accordingly. There are 2 assignments related to team project that are graded individually: project knowledge and peer evaluations. Regardless of how you split the work, each team member is expected to know how every part of the project is accomplished (which will be assessed with the 'project knowledge demonstration' assignment). To deliver high-quality work, you need to meet as a team to brainstorm the structure of your paper before you split the work. We will have a few sessions in class dedicated to team project work, and you are welcome to request additional guidance from me during office hours.

Project deliverables

Deliverables for the team project include a strategic analysis report (broken into 3 parts), a team presentation, project knowledge demonstration, and peer evaluations.

Strategic analysis reports (15%): In your written strategic analysis reports, you will be expected to synthesize frameworks presented throughout the course with research-based evidence on your firm, competitors, partners, and the industry at large (could be more than one industry). The analysis will be split into 3 parts. Each part will have a detailed prompt on Canvas.

You will be evaluated on the four key aspects:

- Accurate and thoughtful use of key theoretical concepts and frameworks from the course
- Thorough and well-documented research, including proper citation of sources
- Use of research and analysis to support arguments
- Clear, logical and coherent analytical structure within and across different parts of the analysis

Team presentation (9%): The ability to clearly and quickly summarize a complex analysis is likely to be an important part of your professional future, so I take the presentation very seriously. You will be required to present to me towards the end of the semester. *All team members must present.* You will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

- **Slides.** Slides will be graded on structure, flow and clarity. You are strongly encouraged to keep the content in the main window *simple* and *clear*, using tables, figures, and other visuals where appropriate. The slides should follow a logical order and be free from typos.
- **Presentation.** You will be graded on preparation and professionalism in your delivery, including timing and pacing, evidence of preparation, and clarity.

Project knowledge demonstration (8%): I expect you to have ownership of the group project and have a deep understanding of the work that you and your teammates are doing. I will ask each team member questions about the project – regarding both the content and the process (e.g. what sources you explored to address question X; what source fact Y came from; what framework was used to analyze Z, etc.). During the 3 in-class group work sessions, you will be expected to answer these types of questions for the sections of the analysis you are working on. During the final presentation Q&A, you are expected to be able to address conceptual questions about any part of the analysis. A more detailed prompt and evaluation criteria will be posted on Canvas.

Team peer evaluations (5%): After completing the team project, you will be asked to assess the contributions and performance of yourself and of your teammates on the project. Your peers' assessments of your own contributions and performance will be used as the basis for your individual peer evaluation grade. These reports will be strictly confidential. Peer feedback serves as incentive for all members to contribute fairly to the team project and as a means for team members to voice their level of satisfaction (or dissatisfaction) with the contributions of other team members. Adjustments to team project grades may result if warranted by peer evaluations. I will meet with teams that report disputes or provide inconsistent reports.

Course Policies

Preparation for class discussions. You are expected to complete readings assigned in advance of a session. Study questions provided for each class session are meant to guide you through the readings, and you are expected to be ready to provide answers to these questions during class discussions.

Use of electronic devices during class. Laptops and tablets should only be used to look at the readings or to take notes (and other class related activities if directed by the instructor). Cell phones should be set on mute and stored away. Photography and video recording are not allowed.

Accessing readings and note taking. I highly recommend printing out the readings and taking notes by hand in a notebook during the class. You may use a laptop or a tablet; however, I may ask you to put an electronic device away if it distracts you or others during the class.

Tardiness. Students are expected to arrive in class on time (whether in person or virtually), as arriving late is disruptive to group discussion. I will do a roll call at the start of every session. Multiple episodes of tardiness will affect your contribution and attendance grade. As mentioned earlier, late assignments will not be accepted.

Course materials. When applicable, lecture notes will be posted on Canvas after class.

Email policy. I respond to emails within 24 hours. Plan ahead if you need a quick response. Please e-mail me on regular e-mail ID (aleks.rebeka@scheller.gatech.edu) instead of sending a message through Canvas.

Classroom values. I hold students to a high standard of respect and inclusion. The case method and team research projects rely on a classroom community in which students hold both themselves and each other responsible for their mutual learning experience. You should also be mindful of conduct that is considered respectful in a professional setting. Respect for your fellow students can be demonstrated in simple ways. Listen carefully to what others say. Be mindful of how your facial expressions and body language affect speakers. Respond to comments that you disagree with assertively but tactfully.

Disrespectful behavior and background chatter will affect your contribution and attendance grade.

Food and drinks. I ask that you not eat food or snacks during the class. The class is discussion-based, and it will be difficult to hear each other if there are other background noises. Feel free to have a cup of coffee or water with you (in fact, I encourage you to carry a water bottle).

Pedagogical use of student work. Copies of student written work may be used by the professor for pedagogical purposes. An example of this would be using student homework or answers to an exam question to illustrate high quality work. Student work so used will be rendered anonymous through the removal of any identifiers.

Georgia Tech Academic Honor Code

As members of the Georgia Tech community, the instructor and students of this class are bound by the Georgia Tech Academic Honor Code. The full text of the Honor Code can be found [here](#). The Office of Dean of Students investigates suspected cases of academic misconduct.

My assumption is that all work submitted for evaluation is YOUR OWN. Plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration on assignments, and accessing online analyses (that includes asking LLMs such as ChatGPT to answer assignment questions for you) and work of students from prior semesters or internet sources are serious violations of the Honor Code. If you have questions about assignments or need help, I should be your first point of contact. Please do not hesitate to reach out via email or come to see me during office hours.

Student Accessibility Services

In accordance with equal education opportunity laws, Georgia Tech provides appropriate academic accommodations for students whose disabilities limit their participation in academic programs for which they are qualified.

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 (please be mindful of the deadline to apply for an accommodation), to make an appointment to discuss your special needs and to obtain an accommodations letter. Once you have an official accommodation, please set up a meeting with me to discuss how I can help with your learning needs.

Mandatory reporting of sexual misconduct

All faculty and staff (including currently employed students who become aware of misconduct while in their working roles) at Georgia Tech are [responsible employees](#), i.e., they are required to “promptly and fully report complaints of or information regarding sexual misconduct” to a Title IX coordinator. Safety is of the utmost importance to Georgia Tech’s faculty and staff. We want to do everything we can to prevent incidents, and to help those who have witnessed or experienced such incidents. Please contact [Title IX coordinators](#) with any questions about required reporting of sexual misconduct.

MGT 6164 Corporate Strategy Fall 2026: Detailed Class Schedule (TBD)

The following schedule is subject to change at any time at the discretion of the professor although every effort will be made to keep the assignments on the dates shown below (the dates will be adjusted to the fall semester schedule).

Session	Day	Topic	Case	Reading
12-Jan	Mon	Course overview		
14-Jan	Wed	Review of the five forces framework and competitive advantage		
19-Jan	Mon	MLK DAY HOLIDAY		
20-Jan	Tue	Introduction card and policies - due by 11:59pm ET		
21-Jan	Wed	Competitive dynamics		Predicting your competitor's reaction
26-Jan	Mon	Wine wars - industry, competition, innovation	Global Wine War 2009: New World versus Old	
28-Jan	Wed	Wine wars - game	Global Wine War 2009: New World versus Old	
30-Jan	Fri	Conversation - due by 11:59pm ET		
2-Feb	Mon	Corporate advantage basics		
4-Feb	Wed	Related and unrelated diversification		Strategies of related diversification
9-Feb	Mon	Amazon venturing into traditional retail and consumer products	Amazon Go: Venturing into traditional retail	
11-Feb	Wed	Amazon - cont'd	Amazon Go: Venturing into traditional retail	
13-Feb	Fri	Team report part 1 draft - due by 11:59pm ET		
16-Feb	Mon	Team project Part 1		
18-Feb	Wed	Vertical integration		Market failures
20-Feb	Fri	Team report part 1 final - due by 11:59pm ET		
23-Feb	Mon	Acquisition vs. alliance		When to ally and when to acquire
25-Feb	Wed	Walt Disney Company and Pixar - alternatives for relationships	The Walt Disney Company and Pixar, Inc.: To Acquire or Not to Acquire?	
2-Mar	Mon	Walt Disney Company and Pixar - acquisition	The Walt Disney Company and Pixar, Inc.: To Acquire or Not to Acquire?	

4-Mar	Wed	Midterm		
9-Mar	Mon	Corporate purpose		Reading: The Purpose Paradigm
11-Mar	Wed	Pharmaceutical industry and AIDS in Africa	Life, Death, and Property Rights: The Pharmaceutical Industry Faces AIDS in Africa	
13-Mar	Fri	Team report part 2 draft - due by 11:59pm ET		
16-Mar	Mon	Pharmaceutical industry and AIDS in Africa	Life, Death, and Property Rights: The Pharmaceutical Industry Faces AIDS in Africa	
18-Mar	Wed	Team project Part 2		
19-Mar	Thu	Team report part 2 final - due by 11:59pm ET		
23-Mar	Mon	SPRING BREAK		
25-Mar	Wed	SPRING BREAK		
30-Mar	Mon	Incumbents and disruptive change		Adapting to digital disruption
1-Apr	Wed	Corporate entrepreneurship		Building breakthrough businesses within established organizations
6-Apr	Mon	IBM transforming, 2012-2016	IBM transforming, 2012-2016: Ginni Rometty steers Watson	
8-Apr	Wed	IBM transforming, 2012-2016	IBM transforming, 2012-2016: Ginni Rometty steers Watson	
10-Apr	Fri	Team report part 3 draft - due by 11:59pm ET		
13-Apr	Mon	Team project Part 3		
15-Apr	Wed	Smith & Wesson in 2022	Smith & Wesson in 2022: Considering Smart Guns	
17-Apr	Fri	Team report part 3 final - due by 11:59pm ET		
20-Apr	Mon	<i>Presentations</i>		
22-Apr	Wed	<i>Presentations</i>		
24-Apr	Fri	Presentation slides and peer evaluations - due by 11:59pm ET		
27-Apr	Mon	Course review		
6-May	Wed	Final exam		