MGT 6164 - Corporate Strategy
Spring 2027

Instructor: Aleks Rebeka, PhD

Office Hours:
By appointment - details on Canvas

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Canvas: **gatech.instructure.com**

Class Meeting: ~~Scheller 201~~
MW 6:30-9:15pm 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 discussions, team research projects, and other 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 consider expanding 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 explicitly address issues of a disruptive change as this is one of the key challenges for established organizations. And finally, 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.

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. You will be required to integrate the aforementioned skills through independent research and analysis, collaboration and a presentation in class discussions.

Course Material

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

We will also rely on The Wall Street Journal and The 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
Individual components	
Contribution to class discussion	16%
Midterm	15%
Final exam	20%
Peer evaluations	5%
Miscellaneous	5%
Group component	
Team reports (2)	24%
Team presentation	15%

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 do 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 (16%)
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 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 to link 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 thought.*
- *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. Students' final class contribution grades will fall under one of four descriptions (conditional on the total number of sessions in which the student contributes):

- **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. Please note that if you are present in class sessions but do not contribute to a discussion, 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 in the midterm exam. Practice questions will be provided.

Team research projects (30%)
Build skills: Business research, analytical reasoning, critical thinking, written and verbal communication, team collaboration and problem solving.

We will have 2 team research projects. Each project will include an in-class teamwork session and a written report:

- An in-class session will provide you with a simulated experience of a brainstorming session that happen in organizations when a team needs to make sense of a problem presented by a client. Before each in-class session, you are expected to do background research on a given topic and consider ways to address the client's problem. During the session, you will work with your team and are expected to contribute to brainstorming – figure out what the problem is, what questions you need to ask yourselves, what frameworks to use, and what data you need for analysis to generate useful insights.
    - These sessions require a very high level of respect and a certain level of intellectual vulnerability. Everyone is expected to maintain an environment that is open, inclusive, accessible, and non-discriminatory on the basis of race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, etc. We want to create an environment of respect, empathy, and attentive, observant communication.
- The in-class session is followed by a team report. The report will include your analysis and recommendations that address questions asked by the client. While the main text of the report should be *no longer* than 6 pages, the report should also include tables and figures that *you create* (think about what parts of the analysis can be better presented in a table format). Mandatory references, tables, and figures do not count toward the page limit.

Team reports will be graded as follows:

Exceeds expectations (A): The report is structured well, has a developed narrative and conclusions. Responses are based on theoretical frameworks and research, are exceptionally analytical, well-reasoned and thorough, citing evidence and examples from credible sources, including tables and figures, where applicable. Used sources are properly cited and documented.
Meets expectations (B): Responses show evidence of research, structured reasoning, and application of theoretical concepts and readings. There are minor mistakes with application of frameworks; minor issues with citations and/or references; minor issues in structure.
Does not meet expectations (C): The report lacks coherence and structure in answers. There are issues with analytical reasoning and/or with the application of course frameworks. The research and documentation of citations and references are poor.
Poor (D): Responses are poorly formulated, unsubstantiated or incomplete. Little to no evidence of conducting research, putting effort to answer questions, or applying frameworks.
Unacceptable (F): no submission; plagiarism which includes using other's ideas without acknowledgement.

At the end of the semester, you will present one of the projects to your classmates and ask questions about the other project presented by another team. The specific parameters and design of the presentation session will be determined once we know the final number of students in the class (and hence the number of teams). The rubric for the final presentation session will also be specified later.

Team peer evaluations (5%)

After completing both team research projects, you will be asked to assess the contributions and performance of yourself and of your teammates across both projects. Your peers' assessments of your own contributions and performance as well as *my personal observation of your work* will be used as the basis for your individual peer evaluation grade. These reports will be strictly confidential. Peer feedback serves as an incentive for all members to contribute fairly to the teamwork and as a means for team members to voice their level of satisfaction (or dissatisfaction) with the contributions of other team

members. Adjustments to grades received for team reports may result if warranted by peer evaluations and my personal observations. 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 (feel free to step out if you have a family or work emergency). 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.

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**.

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 AI tools 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 Spring 2027: Detailed Class Schedule

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. Note: Dates will be adjusted to Spring 2027.

Session	Day	Topic	Case	Reading/Video
21-Aug	Thu	Course overview + Introductions		
		Review of the five forces framework		The Five Competitive Forces That Shape Strategy (HBR)
25-Aug	**Mon**	**Introduction card and policies - due by 11:59pm ET**		
28-Aug	Thu	Review of competitive advantage		
		Competitive dynamics		Predicting your competitor's reaction
1-Sep	Mon	LABOR DAY HOLIDAY		
4-Sep	Thu	Wine wars - case discussion	Global Wine War 2009: New World versus Old	
11-Sep	Thu	Corporate advantage basics		
		Related and unrelated diversification		Strategies of related diversification
18-Sep	Thu	Amazon venturing into traditional retail and consumer products - case discussion	Amazon Go: Venturing into traditional retail	
25-Sep	Thu	Team research project 1 - Walmart and health clinics		
28-Sep	**Sun**	**Team report 1 - due by 11:59pm ET**		
2-Oct	Thu	Vertical integration		Market failures
		Acquisition vs. alliance		When to ally and when to acquire
6-Oct	Mon	FALL BREAK		
9-Oct	Thu	Walt Disney Company and Pixar - case discussion	The Walt Disney Company and Pixar, Inc.: To Acquire or Not to Acquire?	
16-Oct	Thu	**Midterm**		
23-Oct	Thu	Incumbents and disruptive change		Adapting to digital disruption
		Corporate entrepreneurship		Building breakthrough businesses within established organizations
30-Oct	Thu	IBM transforming, 2012-2016	IBM transforming, 2012-2016: Ginni Rometty steers Watson	
6-Nov	Thu	Corporate purpose		Reading: The Purpose Paradigm Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jSpUJIAL9lU&ab_channel=SirKensington%27s
		Pharmaceutical industry and AIDS in Africa	Life, Death, and Property Rights: The Pharmaceutical Industry Faces AIDS in Africa	
13-Nov	Thu	Team research project 2 - TBD		
16-Nov	**Sun**	**Team report 2 - due by 11:59pm ET**		
20-Nov	Thu	***Presentations***		
23-Nov	**Sun**	**Presentation materials and peer evaluations - due by 11:59pm ET**		
26-Nov	Wed	THANKSGIVING BREAK		
11-Dec	**Thu**	**Final exam**		