Overview and Objectives

This is a doctoral level seminar on selected topics in corporate strategy. In each class, we will discuss and develop a particular perspective on these topics. The basic purpose of the course is to familiarize students with the basic assumptions, concepts, theories, empirical approaches and their limitations in contemporary research in these areas. Because these are evolving subject areas and undergoing continual change, the boundaries of the field are fuzzy, subjective and open to interpretation and reinterpretation. The idea of the course is to provide an exposure to the major 'lenses' underpinning these phenomena.

The emphasis in this course will be on empirical testing as well as theory building. We will examine some of the fundamental tests of theories. We will also try to push the boundaries of the familiar and new theoretical perspectives, and possibly identify opportunities for cross-fertilization. In each case, we will attempt to derive testable predictions. Finally, we will integrate the various perspectives and attempt to inform the current debates in the field.

Approach

The format of the course will be that of a research seminar meaning active, engaged reading of the week’s materials followed by an intensive group discussion. The reading load is reasonable, but the expectation is that each student will come prepared to discuss each article. In addition, we may have some in class assignments.

When reading the assigned articles, you will find both good points and areas for improvement. While it is important to understand both the good and bad points of the research reported in each article, the following sets of questions should serve as a guide to your preparation of each reading:

- What questions are the authors trying to address? Are these important research questions?
• Does the paper extend existing literature? In what way?
• How is the research question approached? What is the design of the study? If empirical, is the methodology appropriate? Is the operationalization of key variables appropriate? Can you think of other ways to measure key variables?
• What assumptions are made in the paper? Are these assumptions appropriate/realistic?
• What conclusions are made in the paper? Are these conclusions appropriate given the empirical evidence? Are the conclusions important?
• Could this work be extended or refined? How?
• How does this paper relate to the other papers in the session?

Course Requirements/ Evaluation

The course requirements reflect the primary 'outcome objectives' of this course, namely familiarization with good empirical research, ability to discriminate between good and bad research, and ability to design and conduct superior empirical research (and more immediately, passing the comprehensive exam and writing a dissertation). To that end, grading will be based on two broad components:

1. Research Project (50%): You will complete a term-paper or proposal for this course by the end of the term. The theme of the project should relate to how firms can create a competitive advantage or appropriate financial value through the use of M&A or strategic alliances. This is a broad theme that runs through the whole course. The idea is to identify and develop a theoretical perspective(s) on the performance implications of M&A/strategic alliances. Once such a perspective has been identified, you should critically appraise the related literature, identifying the assumptions/pitfalls and delineating the conditions under which value will be created and/or appropriated.

This paper may or may not contain an actual empirical test, though in the absence of an empirical test, you may consider including testable propositions and a well thought-out research design. Alternatively, you could also craft a completely conceptual paper.

There will be no incompletes given in this course. Even though the consolidated project is due at the end of the term, I expect that you will develop your ideas throughout the term. For this reason, you will get an opportunity to discuss your progress through the week in each class. Each student will be given up to 5 minutes (or one slide for presentation) in each class session to update the instructor and the rest of the class regarding the progress made and any challenges encountered.

2. Class Contribution / Presentations (50%): The discussions should deal with the following: question or topic, received theory and literature, methods of research, data sources, tests and treatments, alternative approaches, findings and
conclusions, presentation style, problems and flaws, implications for theory and meaning to managers.

An active and well-informed discussion is critical to the success of such a course. Consequently, each student will be graded on the frequency and quality of their contribution to such discussions. Each student is responsible to read all the required readings for each session. The emphasis is on the depth of understanding that is embodied in the comments, questions and answers rather than only frequency.

You are expected to read and be able to discuss all the readings in all of the class sessions. However, one student may be responsible for identifying and summarizing the related literature beyond the assigned readings. In other words, while the whole class will read and discuss the assigned readings, one student will summarize the broader literature on the class topic.

Students auditing the course should read the articles, participate actively and lead discussions, but are exempt from the term-paper requirement.
CLASS SCHEDULE

1. **Introduction**

Directions and modes of firm growth and their performance consequences. Discussion of students’ research interests and potential ideas for research projects.

2. **Acquiring for Competitive Advantage & Knowledge**


**Optional Readings:**


3. **Allying for Competitive Advantage**


**Optional Readings:**


**4. Experience and Learning**


5. Market Power, Information Asymmetry & Rivalry


Optional Readings:


6. Innovation and Creative Destruction (the following list will be shortened based on potential overlap with other courses)

assessing innovation: Construct development of innovation locus, type, and characteristics. Management Science 48(9): 1103-1122.


Optional Readings:


Tushman M.L. and P. Anderson, 1986, Technological Discontinuities and Organizational Environments Administrative Science Quarterly; Sep


7. Presentations

Deadline for Final Draft of papers/proposals: February 28