BADM 780
Strategic Management

Instructor: Dr. Marcie Sariol  
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This course is facilitated entirely online. To get started, please login to Desire to Learn (D2L) at d2l.sdbor.edu. You can also login to D2L through the USD portal located at my.usd.edu.

It should go without saying that this syllabus serves as a contract and as such, the contractual obligations outlined below are agreed to by your continued presence in this course. I will uphold my side of the obligations and as such, expect each of you to do the same.

Required Readings
There is no textbook for this class. Instead, we will use articles and cases, most of which you can purchase as a package through a Harvard Business Publishing “Course pack” that I have assembled.

School Mission:
Our primary mission is excellence in undergraduate and graduate education that develops successful future business leaders. We deliver high value to our students, employers, and community through distinctive teaching and learning supported by significant intellectual and professional contributions, and meaningful service.

Course Prerequisites
You should have completed 4 other MBA classes prior to taking this course. Please see the instructor for information on registration options if you have not fulfilled the course prerequisites. It is also assumed that you have taken an undergraduate course in Strategic Management (the USD course is BADM 482/582). If you have not had such a course, or if it has been a while since you had such a class, you may want to review a fundamentals textbook on the subject. I have some copies that I can loan on a first-come basis.

Course Overview
This is the capstone course for MBA students. It is designed to help students learn the principles of strategic management and to help you integrate the knowledge you have gained from other courses. Students are required to use their knowledge of topics like finance, economics, accounting, marketing, and management to develop strategic plans that advance the goals of the firm or corporation. This top management view will be reinforced through the use of business cases.

Course Objectives
1. Gather and analyze environmental data for a firm. This includes a critical, in-depth look at both the general and industry environments.
2. Analyze a firm’s internal attributes to identify its competitive advantages and recognize its strategic weaknesses.
3. Demonstrate an ability to use critical thinking skills to integrate this information into a comprehensive view of strategic opportunities.
4. To form a sound, viable, strategic plan at both the firm and corporate levels.
5. To be able to integrate previously learned material into a comprehensive view of the business enterprise.

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<th>Dr. Sariol’s Learning Objectives*</th>
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<td>Learning to apply course material (to improve thinking, problem solving, and decisions)</td>
<td>Cases, Exams, Alliance vs. Acquisition Assignment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learning to analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments, and points of view</td>
<td>Cases, Discussions, Acquisition Assignment</td>
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*These are the objectives that I personally want the class to do well on. You will assess your progress on these objectives at the end of the class during evaluation time. Please feel free to ask me questions on this. I will talk about this in more detail later.

Program Assessment

The Beacom School of Business strives for continuous improvement in education. To help us do that, we have developed a series of broad learning goals and assessment measures for each goal. This course is designed to help meet the following assessment goals:

- Our graduates will demonstrate knowledge of core concepts in business disciplines
- Our graduates will demonstrate an understanding of the interdisciplinary and integrative nature of business in a global environment
  - Graduates will demonstrate an understanding of strategic integration.
  - Graduates will use critical thinking skills to make strategic decisions in a global environment.

We will use several measures to help us determine if these goals are being met. One is the ETS Standard Field Exam. More information about the exam is found in the Assignment section of this syllabus. There are also questions embedded in your exams which will be used for assessment purposes.

General Course Policies
Reasonable Accommodations
Any student who feels s/he may need academic accommodations or access accommodations based on the impact of a documented disability should contact and register with Disability Services during the first week of class. Disability Services is the official office to assist students through the process of disability verification and coordination of appropriate and reasonable accommodations. Students currently registered with Disability Services must obtain a new accommodation memo each semester. Please note: if your home institution is not the University of South Dakota but one of the other South Dakota Board of Regents institutions (e.g., SDSU, SDSMT, BHSU, NSU, DSU), you should work with the disability services coordinator at your home institution.

For information contact:
Ernetta L. Fox, Director Disability Services
Disability Services, Room 119 Service Center
(605) 677-6389
http://www.usd.edu/ds/
disabilityservices@usd.edu

Diversity and Inclusive Excellence
The University of South Dakota strives to foster a globally inclusive learning environment where opportunities are provided for diversity to be recognized and respected. To learn more about USD’s diversity and inclusiveness initiatives, please visit the website for the Office of Diversity.

Academic Integrity
Learning is best achieved in an environment of trust between students and teachers. Trust can only be earned and maintained if both students and teachers act with integrity. Members of this class shall uphold the following policies:

Instructor responsibility: At a very minimum, I am obligated to uphold the Board of Regents and University policy covering Freedom in Learning which states: “Under Board of Regents and University policy student academic performance may be evaluated solely on an academic basis, not on opinions or conduct in matters unrelated to academic standards. Students should be free to take reasoned exception to the data or views offered in any course of study and to reserve judgment about matters of opinion, but they are responsible for learning the content of any course of study for which they are enrolled. Students who believe that an academic evaluation reflects prejudiced or capricious consideration of student opinions or conduct unrelated to academic standards should contact Dr. DeVee Dykstra, Associate Dean, at 605-677-5894 to initiate a review of the evaluation.”

Personally, I consider this a very low standard. I intend to encourage a deeper sense of trust by promising to treat students with utmost respect and dignity. I encourage students to think critically about course material and to feel free to challenge prevailing ideas. I encourage student interaction and debate with the caveat that all parties remain respectful to each other.

Student responsibility: Students also have a minimal level of responsibility as outlined by the Board of Regents and University policy. As stated above, students are responsible for learning the content of any course of study in which they are enrolled. At the heart of academic integrity is the concept that all
graded assignments represent the legitimate work of the student(s) submitting them. The most common violation of academic integrity is plagiarism which is defined as using the words and/or ideas of another and representing them to be your own, without proper credit to the author or source.

**All forms of academic dishonesty will result in automatic failure of the course.** You are completing the final stages of your MBA and will soon be leaders in business. I will not send an unethical individual out into a leadership position. I expect, and even demand, the very highest levels of personal integrity and ethical standards from you. You would do well to hold yourself to these same expectations now and throughout your career. Failure to do so will most assuredly lead to personal tragedy.

The University of South Dakota considers plagiarism, cheating, and other forms of academic dishonesty inimical to the objectives of higher education. The University supports the imposition of penalties on students who have been adjudicated to have engaged in academic dishonesty, as defined in the “Conduct” section of the University of South Dakota Student Handbook, and South Dakota Board of Regents policy 2-33 [www.sdbor.edu/policy/Documents/2-33.pdf](http://www.sdbor.edu/policy/Documents/2-33.pdf).

No credit can be given for a dishonest assignment. A student found to have engaged in any form of academic dishonesty may, at the discretion of the instructor, be:

a. Given a zero for that assignment.
b. Allowed to rewrite and resubmit the assignment for credit.
c. Assigned a reduced grade for the course.
d. Dropped from the course.
e. Failed in the course.

For information about the university's technical, academic, and student support services, as well as how to take advantages of these services, please refer to the Online Student Handbook in the USD Getting Started section on the course homepage. This document also contains important information pertaining to minimum technology requirements, registration information, as well as other university services and policies.

**Changes**

Occasional changes in the syllabus may have to be made. Changes will be posted in the news/announcement area of the course.

**Late Assignments**

Many of the assignments for the class are group assignments. I expect all group assignments to be submitted on time. Late group assignments will not be accepted. While I also expect individual assignments to also be turned in on time, I am willing to make some allowances for extenuating circumstances (e.g. major illness, death in the family, etc.) (Note: your goldfish does not qualify as a family member!)

**Teams/Groups**

We will divide the class into 2 different types of teams/groups: 1) **case teams** and 2) **discussion groups**.

1) Case teams will have approximately 4-5 members. (One or two teams may only have 6 members depending upon class enrollment.) You will select your own teams. Choose wisely. I strongly recommend choosing teammates with complementary skills. Teams will be utilized for both case
analysis and the final alliance/acquisition company analysis. Each team member will also submit a peer evaluation.

2) Discussion groups will combine 2 case teams (approximately 10 members). These groups will contribute to threaded discussions on the course readings. You and your team will be added to different group discussion shells throughout the semester so that you have an opportunity to discuss weekly content with all teams.

Course Activities and Assignment Information – all assignments, discussions, and exams will be graded within 10 days of the submission deadline.

Live Office Hours
Each week, I will host a live office hour session. These are optional (i.e. not mandatory). I will answer all questions during that time including those sent to me via email and questions asked live during the session. Please send me those questions prior to the session so that I am able to address them to everyone. I enjoy discussing any and all material so please feel free to join even if you do not have questions concerning the material. There will not be any sessions on exam weeks or weeks when cases are due. If you have questions during those weeks, please email me and I will respond via email. I am more than happy to answer questions throughout the week if you prefer (phone call or email).

These sessions are going to be held using Collaborate Ultra which can be found in the communications tab under Collaborate Ultra. Additionally, there is a link posted in the upper left hand corner of the course home page. These sessions will be made available to those who are not able to attend (i.e. recorded). I will post the recording the day after in the applicable content week. I will obviously only post sessions that have questions asked during. There is no sense in uploading a recording where no students stopped by to ask questions. Please refer to the welcome letter for additional information.

Power Point Slides/Lecture Video
For weeks with readings, I will provide slides that help explain the week’s topic. These will be posted at the start of each week. I will also post a video in the content area for each week in which I discuss these slides. To remain ADA (Americans with Disabilities) compliant, I have posted what is said on each slide in the notes section of each slide (slideshow must be downloaded to read notes), Please refer to the ‘Welcome Letter’ for more detail. I record these each semester hence all videos not being available at the start of each semester.

Exams (2) – 100 points each (Individual Assignment)
Exams will cover the readings and material presented in the weekly lecture. They do not consist of questions concerning the cases. They will consist of multiple choice and essay questions. Exams will be open book and will not require a proctor. Exams are open for the entire week. You should plan to set aside two hours (120 minutes) for exams. I will provide more detail the week before each exam. Generally speaking, you should expect 2-3 essays and about 30 multiple choice questions (this varies slightly with each exam).

Discussion Forums (8) – 15 points each (Individual Assignment)
There are 8 group discussion weeks corresponding to the course readings. These discussions are intended to explore your thoughts on those readings. You should contribute substantially to your discussion group several times each week. I will provide a starting question or two for the first week to get things rolling. After that, students should generate their own discussion questions. **While there are no strict requirements for the number of posts you should make each week, I will offer some guidelines. Each student should have at least one (new) post that includes a clear and specific question related to the reading and at least 2 posts that respond to other posts. In other words, at a minimum, I am looking for three posts each week. I believe that this commitment is small compared to the time commitment that is otherwise required in a face-to-face course. If there are ten members in a discussion forum, there should be ten individual threads started.** Your response posts should be thoughtful responses to the questions of others or to responses of responses, etc. 300 words of comments is a rough minimum. It can span as few as 2 or 3 comments up to a much larger quantity. I strongly prefer thoughtful and quality comments over sheer volume. This activity should be easy for graduate students who are nearing the end of their program. I imagine that discussing trends or similarities in your current career or experiences should be somewhat fun!

This is intended to emulate in-class group discussions. I am sure each of you has experienced a group discussion similar to this. As you may recall from that experience, your professor or lead person was not able to sit in all groups at once and instead, circulated between groups picking up on individual points during the conversation. I will do the same. It is not my intention to comment on each thread nor is it possible given the sheer amount of students. Please do keep in mind that I will try my best to read all threads though so make every effort to provide quality contributions. I will chime in and most likely play devil’s advocate.

To give everyone the best experience in these discussion forums, the teams will rotate every two discussion weeks or so, so that students have the opportunity to discuss material with as many unique perspectives and thoughts as possible. Because of the way that D2L is set up, your team will shift to a new group (i.e. group boards (shells) are stationary while teams are not). The previous posts in that group shell will be visible from the previous teams in that particular discussion group. I will always announce before I shuffle teams so that you are aware that your discussions from the week before will no longer be visible to you and to remind you that you will have new discussion group companions.

**Cases (3) – 80 points each (Team assignments)**
Cases are included in the Coursepack. Cases serve a few purposes. One major purpose is to analyze the actions of existing firms and see what could have been done differently, if anything at all. Cases are especially useful to apply material. Strategic decisions are always contingent and cases provide a good context by which we can explore how and why other executives made the decisions they did.

I will provide a set of questions for each case. Cases often do not have right or wrong answers, only options. Thus case reports are not about reaching a specific, predetermined conclusion. Cases are about critical thinking and being able to justify your decisions. Many strategic leaders often disagree with each other. That is to be expected. **I do NOT want the team to divide the case questions up and have one member answer question #1, another does #2, and so on. All team members should participate in a discussion on how to respond to each question.** I will grade cases based on your depth of thought and
rationale. You will be expected to analyze the facts of the case and assess the relative importance of given information. You should be able to identify possible courses of action and the tradeoffs associated with each. You will then be required to make recommendations for future actions, providing sound justifications for your decisions.

Cases are significant assignments and should be treated as such. While there is no specific length requirement, most case reports are usually 1500 – 2000 words and are often supported by charts, graphs, calculations, etc. explaining and/or justifying your analysis and recommendations. While it is incredibly pleasing to read case responses that are written with transitioning ideas (much like a thesis), I much rather prefer that each response is numbered to clearly indicate where one response with its own ideas ends and another response with its own ideas begins. In other words, please number your responses in your final document. I hope that minimizing this additional transition work will allow for more time to be put forth towards each response. **IMPORTANT: Please do not put your names or team number on your final document. I blind grade these to ensure previously submitted work does not influence future work.**

While I realize that it is unusual to work in teams in an online class because it can be difficult to coordinate ideas and times to work with another, please remember that there are numerous options available for coordinating efforts—one in particular is the discussion board set aside for each team. I have even made available the option to post anonymously in your discussion area if you feel more comfortable doing so. Please note: I do not monitor these discussion boards. They are completely optional to use.

***The biggest gain from these cases is the discussion between members which would otherwise be absent if these cases were done individually.***

**Case Reading Notes – 10 points each (Individual assignment)**

While cases are group assignments, each individual is also required to submit their personal “reading notes.” Its content is not strictly specified, but can include questions, possible answers to case questions for the group to consider, insights or connections you’ve generated from the reading, etc. These should be created as you read through the case on your own before you get together with your group. They should be roughly 500 – 1000 words in length and should be submitted to the appropriate dropbox folder by **Sunday of the week before the case write-up due dates.**

These will be graded largely on an effort basis more than on the quality of the content. However, quality thinking at this stage will certainly influence the quality of your group assignments that will follow, so avoid treating these like busy work.

**Alliance vs. Acquisition Assignment – 50 points (Individual assignment)**

I will provide you with a hypothetical situation and you will provide me with an analysis of whether the two companies should join in an alliance or if one of the companies should acquire the other. More information is provided in the assignment which can be found in D2L.

**Acquisition Assignment – 150 points (Team assignment)**

This assignment will constitute your **final exam.** In this class we will discuss the corporate strategies associated with strategic acquisitions. In this assignment you will choose a publicly held company and
identify an acquisition target. You will do an analysis of potential benefits and problems, provide a financial analysis of potential benefits, and a maximum target price. This assignment is similar to the cases we will do except you will not be handed all the information on a silver platter. You will need to use the internet and library resources to assemble your own set of case facts and information. This makes it more realistic, a bit more fun (in my opinion), but also more challenging. This assignment is similar to a case write up, only bigger. You will have to provide me the relevant information for the acquisition. The assignment itself can be found in D2L.

**Peer Evaluations – 50 points**

Being a social loafer is about as unprofessional as it gets. At the end of the semester everyone will complete a peer evaluation. If it becomes clear that someone was not a productive and proactive teammate, they will have their scores reduced on any and all assignments that were negatively impacted.

**ETS Exam**

USD uses a nationally standardized exam commonly referred to as the ETS (educational testing service) exam to help assess our curriculum and the quality of our program. You are **required** to take the exam during this class. Please note: all students are required to take this course (BADM 780) and as such, making the ETS exam a requirement for the semester a student is enrolled in BADM 780 ensures all students complete this exam. The exam covers a wide range of business topics including marketing, finance, and strategic management. Given its multi-disciplinary nature that includes information from all of your other courses, I feel it is inappropriate to include it as part of the grading criteria for this class. **For this class your grade is dependent upon the material covered in this course, not other courses. Therefore, this exam is not for grade (i.e. points) in this course.** More information will be provided later by the MBA Coordinator. Please keep in mind, I am merely the messenger for this exam. All questions, concerns, comments etc should be directed to the MBA Coordinator:

Jewel Shepherd  
(605) 658-6548  
Jewel.Shepherd@usd.edu

Please note that there are additional resources available under USD Resources on the course homepage such as:

- Library Services for Distance Learners
- Writing Center Assistance
- Technology Assistance & Information
- Disability Services
- Veterans Services
- Submit an ITS Help Desk Ticket