I. Course overview and purpose
Understanding how a firm should be managed to achieve success is fundamental to the study of business. This course addresses two closely related but distinct concerns: [1] what strategies lead to success across firms and industries, and [2] what a manager should do to achieve success in a particular situation.

Historically, business schools had a business policy course that focused on the decisions made by the firm’s top managers to achieve this end. This course typically has been an integrative capstone taken after students had studied the functional disciplines of business (e.g., finance, accounting, marketing, operations, organizational behavior). Currently, the field of strategic management has infused the capstone/business policy course, particularly in bringing economics-based perspectives to understanding competition, evolution of industries, and sources of rent (economic profit).

This course is designed to address these concerns and perspectives through theory- and case-based study of firm-level business strategy and performance. Specifically, each student will be required to [a] engage in seminar-format discussions addressing theory and cases, [b] individually develop an integrated perspective on how a firm should be managed to achieve success, [c] working as part of a group, design and carry out a research project related to the purposes of the course.
Class sessions will be conducted as seminars. I use the term *seminar* to capture the objective of thoughtful and critical discussions of the assigned readings and cases in which each person is expected to be a contributor. This is not a lecture class with one-way information flow.

I encourage an analytical approach in class sessions, written work, and presentations. To me, *analytical* indicates seeking to identify underlying problems and issues, evaluating the theories and evidence presented, and comparing and contrasting across different readings and perspectives. An analytical approach contrasts both with descriptive (compiling facts, definitions, and lists) and argumentative (muster evidence in support of a pre-established position) approaches.

**II. Expectations**

In general, students are expected to demonstrate the level of motivation, responsibility, and quality of work consistent with the explicit and implicit expectations associated with graduate study at a leading research university. Quality work requires thinking critically and systematically, writing clearly, and communicating ideas and arguments in a seminar format.

Every student should be prepared to make high quality contributions at every class session based upon assigned material. Studying (not just simply reading) assigned readings and cases is necessary for students to meet expectations for contribution.

**III. Grades**

Each student will be assigned a grade that represents my judgment as to the student’s accomplishment and contribution in the course. The weighting in determining the grade will be

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Component</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Individual analyses of cases (3 required)</td>
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<tr>
<td>25%</td>
<td>Individual paper: integrated perspective on firm success</td>
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<tr>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Individual contribution to class discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Group written presentation of assigned subject</td>
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<tr>
<td>30%</td>
<td>Group research project (presentation and final written report will be graded; proposals/intermediate submissions will be graded pass-fail)</td>
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I consider a grade of B (3.0) to be appropriate for high-quality work that has no significant errors of either omission or commission. This grade represents the minimum expectation for graduate students at a leading research university. Grades above 3.0 require the demonstration of excellence above and beyond this level.

**Important notes on grades:**

1. A student will not earn a passing grade in this course without a passing weighted average (as above) grade on individual written assignments.

2. Note: If it is clear to me that the contribution of an individual to the group research project is significantly above or below that of other group members, the grade for the individual will be adjusted accordingly, up or down from the grade assigned the group.
IV. Policies
1. Strict adherence to University of Washington, Bothell standards with respect to academic integrity is expected implicitly by enrollment in this course. The section on plagiarism (below) and the links contained therein are assigned reading for this class.

2. E-mail sent to your UW account is considered by UWB to be official communication. I will send notices regarding the class to the list of currently enrolled students, and it is your responsibility to receive these e-mails.

3. Each written assignment must be completed and submitted in hard-copy format by the beginning of the class session at which it is due. Late assignments will receive a substantial penalty. If you cannot attend a class when an assignment is due, or if you have a one-time printing problem, I will accept an e-mail attachment or a faxed copy as indicating the assignment was completed on time, but you must provide me a hard copy as soon as possible.

4. Laptops, blackberries, etc. in class. Please do not use computers or other electronic devices during class for anything (e.g., e-mail, NCAA) not directly related to the material at hand. My purpose for this policy is to maintain individual and class focus. We all benefit when we are collectively engaged.

V. Plagiarism
When I suspect that a student or group has committed plagiarism, I will follow established UWB procedures for addressing the matter. If a student or group has committed plagiarism, I will assign a grade of zero for that project.

The following two links are required reading for students in BUS 544. Instances of plagiarism will not be excused due to a professed lack of understanding; if you have any questions, please ASK!

UWB policies and procedures regarding academic integrity (including plagiarism) can be found at [http://www.uwb.edu/students/policies/integrity.html](http://www.uwb.edu/students/policies/integrity.html).

Northwestern University’s detailed site that gives examples of plagiarism can be found at [http://www.northwestern.edu/uacc/plagiar.html](http://www.northwestern.edu/uacc/plagiar.html).

VI. Contribution to class discussion

Although I emphasize an analytical approach, there certainly is room for individual opinion but I expect this to be reasoned, not based on pre-conceptions.

I hope for lively and even intense discussions of opposing viewpoints. Nevertheless, personal attacks and/or lack of respect for others and/or their ideas are unacceptable and will not be tolerated.
VII. Group assignments
Students will self-select groups for two assignments.

Group presentation on assigned subject area (as scheduled)
Each group will make a presentation building on a single chapter in the text (Chapters 4 through 10 are available). Your purpose is to add value to the text chapter.

- One class period prior to your presentation, submit to me via email supplemental material for distribution to the class (either in pdf form or links that are readily accessible). This supplemental material can either explore the subject in greater depth and/or provide relevant examples. Please submit at least 3 items.

- For the presentation, expect to have 20 minutes for the presentation plus 15-20 minutes to respond to questions. The presentation should be planned with the assumption that your audience has studied the material (both the chapter and the supplemental material). A presentation that simply outlines the chapter and covers no additional material will not be satisfactory.

Other than the supplemental material noted, there is no written assignment associated with this presentation.

Group research project
Each group will write and present a research project that builds on the required material from this course. You will be expected to apply course material to particular business situations, to identify the underlying problem(s) faced by management, and to formulate and justify strategies.

These are the staged requirements and due dates:

- Wednesday April 12: Propose an industry to be studied and present a preliminary list of research questions

  A “high technology” industry is obvious, given the theme of the program, the title of the course, and the interests of many students, but I am completely open to other ideas.

  The proposal should present research questions (that address success in this industry) and describe how you see these questions being addressed both by the material from the course so far and by models and frameworks from other classes in the program.

  This proposal should be approximately 3-5 pages in length.

- Monday April 24: Propose one or more firms to be studied (in your chosen industry) and present an updated list of research questions

  Building on what you submitted previously at the industry level, you may choose to either focus on a single firm or a group of firms competing in the same industry.
The scope of the research questions should be expanded to address strategies for specific firms seeking success and competitive advantage. As before, describe how you see these questions being addressed both by the material from the course so far and by models and frameworks from other classes in the program.

This proposal should be approximately 5-8 pages in length.

- Presentation (date to be assigned)
- Final report due Monday June 5 (both electronically and hard copy)

Final report should be approximately 15-25 pages in length, not including tables, figures, and references.

VIII. Individual assignments

Two-page analyses of three cases
Choose three of the following cases: Dell, HP-Cisco, Patagonia, GE, and BRL Hardy

For each case, I will provide specific questions to spark your analysis. In general, apply models and frameworks from this class to address: how well the company is performing relative to its industry, what kinds of strategic issues does its management face, what are the alternative courses of action available, and what criteria should be used to evaluate those alternatives?

Each analysis is due (hard copy) at the beginning of the class session for which the case is assigned.

Individual paper: integrated perspective on firm success (due Monday June 5)
One of the primary purposes of this course is to provide you an opportunity to develop your perspective on how firms should be managed to achieve success. The final individual requirement will be a paper in which you present this perspective in an integrated fashion, using theory and examples from this course and, where appropriate, what you have studied in other courses. I view this as a capstone project for your capstone class.

One way I am thinking about this is that you are being challenged to be a “producer of knowledge” with this assignment. Christensen and Raynor (2003) stated that managers are “voracious users of theory.” Here, in one of your last assignments in this UWB Graduate program, I want you to be a producer of theory as well.

Guidelines:

1. Please do not settle for generalizations, particularly when you use terms in common use like “leadership” or “operational efficiency.” Be very precise in defining terms such as these. Moreover, since the paper should address “how firms should be managed to achieve success” (quoting from above), make sure you clearly state how firms accomplish the elements you write about.
2. Avoid tautologies (in this case, defining terms so that the definition itself answers the question “what leads to success?”) I see this as a potential problem, again, with concepts like leadership or operational efficiency. For example: I could define leadership as “the influence necessary for the success of an organization.” But then, by definition, leadership leads to success. To avoid tautologies, therefore, I would have to define leadership in a way that does not include success.

3. Pay attention to the calculus (the functional form of the relationship between variables: linear, curvilinear, etc.) and contingencies (the boundary conditions for a relationship between variables).

4. Do not rely on preconceived notions. Challenge your assumptions. You must back up your ideas with facts and citations. That “it makes sense” is not sufficient.

Length: I suggest (but do not require; this is a knowledge-producing endeavor) a length of 6-8 pages (exclusive of references, tables, and figures). Within this length, please include a 1-page summary of the basic elements of your perspective.

Citations: All ideas you present in the paper should be carefully referenced using a consistent standard style.

Due: Monday June 5 at 5:45 pm, hard copy.

IX. Statement from Disability Support Services
If you believe that you have a disability and would like academic accommodations, please contact Disability Support Services at 425.352.5307, TDD 425.352.5303, FAX 425.352.5455, or at rlundborg@uwb.edu. In most cases, you will need to provide documentation of your disability as part of the review process.

X. Schedule
The following is the intended schedule of when assigned readings will be covered in class discussion. These readings are from three types of sources, as follows:

- **Case:** Harvard Business School Publishing case study (case packet available at UWB Bookstore)
- **Article:** Available electronically through Library ERes

**Week 1**
- **Monday March 27** (we will meet for double session this evening)
  - Overview of the course; strategy, the work of top management, and integration

- **Wednesday March 29**
  - No class meeting (evening devoted to BUS 546)
  - Read assigned material on plagiarism
Week 2
• Monday April 3
  Text: Chapter 1
  Case: Timex Corp.
  Case: Wal-Mart Stores’ Discount Operations

• Wednesday April 5
  Text: Chapter 2

Week 3
• Monday April 10
  Text: Chapter 3
  Case: Matching Dell

• Wednesday April 12
  Group research project: submission #1, proposal for industry to be studied

Week 4
• Monday April 17
  Text: Chapter 4

• Wednesday April 19 (Leadership Speaker Series tonight)
  Text: Chapter 5

Week 5
• Monday April 24
  Text: Chapter 6 & 7
  Group research project: submission #2, proposal for firm(s) to be studied

• Wednesday April 26 (BUS 546 midterm tonight)

Week 6
• Monday May 1
  Text: Chapters 8 and 9
• Wednesday May 3  
  Text: Chapter 10  
  Case: The HP-Cisco Alliance (A)

**Week 7**  
• Monday May 8  
  Guest speaker: John Plaza, President and Founder of Seattle Biodiesel  

• Wednesday May 10  
  Case: Patagonia

**Week 8**  
• Monday May 15  
  Case: GE’s talent machine  
  Case: BRL Hardy: Globalizing an Australian wine company

• Wednesday May 17  
  TBA

**Week 9**  
• Monday May 22: Presentations of group research projects

• Wednesday May 24: Presentations of group research projects

**Week 10**  
• Monday May 29: Memorial Day Holiday, no class

• Wednesday May 31: No class meeting (evening devoted to BUS 546)

**Week 11**  
• Monday June 5  
  TBA  
  Individual paper due: integrated perspective on firm success  
  Group research project final report due