



STGY 5903A: Strategic Concepts

FALL 2025

Instructor	Prof. Guoliang Frank Jiang
Email Address	Frank.jiang@carleton.ca
Class Times	Thu, 8:35 am - 11:25 am
Modality	In-person
Office Hours	By appointment
Office Location	5056 Nicol Building
TA Name/Email	

Pre-Requisites & Preclusions:

Prerequisites: n/a

Preclusions: BUSI 5001

Course Description/Instructor's Statement

Carleton Calendar Description

An overview of business models and key strategic concepts facing firms in a global environment. Core functional area concepts in accounting, marketing, operations, and HR are introduced and integrated through simulation. Skills in managing teams, meetings, business planning and presenting business plans.

Instructor's Description:

This course provides students with the conceptual tools necessary to assess firms' business models and strategies. Specifically, the course focuses on the application of the following key strategic concepts and frameworks: business model, value chain, core competence, competitive advantage, SWOT analysis, organizational structure, etc.

Business managers need to make critical decisions that transcend functional areas. Through a series of case studies and an online business simulation, this course provides students with experiential learning opportunities to develop a holistic organizational perspective that integrates subsequent specialized functional area courses such as marketing, operations, human resource management, and accounting. Furthermore, as the first component of the Integrative Foundation in the MBA curriculum, this course introduces students to the connections between strategy, business ethics, and the global business environment.

Course Learning Objectives:

1. An understanding of fundamental aspects of business models and strategies
2. Application of conceptual frameworks to the analysis of practical business problems
3. An understanding of the role of diverse functions such as finance, marketing, operations, and human resource management in determining firm performance

4. Familiarity with the elements of business plan preparation
5. Development of critical thinking skills
6. Development of communication skills
7. Experience in managing teams

Required/Optional Materials & Prices

Readings

A list of articles from published journals has been compiled for the course. These readings are available at "ARES Reserves" on Brightspace.

Online Simulation

This course employs a business simulation (the *Venture Strategy* from <http://www.marketplace-simulation.com/>) as a critical learning environment. You will learn what it is like to compete in a fast-paced, competitive marketplace. Students must register individually to participate in the simulation. Detailed instructions for registration will be provided in class. It is strongly recommended that you use your Carleton email address when you register for a student account. The price of the simulation is USD 50.00.

Coursepack

A coursepack comprising of case studies and teaching notes has been created at the Ivey Publishing website. Follow the link (<https://www.iveypublishing.ca/s/ivey-coursepack/a1ROF000004eZGC2A2>) to purchase this required material before the course starts. The price of the coursepack is CAD 54.00.

Note: The case for the final exam is not included in this coursepack and must be purchased separately at the time of the exam. More information will be provided in class.

Grading Scheme

Simulation business plan and presentation (written business plan 15% + presentation 5%)	20%
Simulation performance	5%
* Reflection on the simulation	15%
* Case write-ups	15%
* Class participation	15%
* Final exam	30%
Total	100%

** Items with asterisk are individual components*

Important Dates to Note

Simulation business plan and presentation	November 6, 2025
Reflection on the simulation	December 7, 2025
Case write-ups	Ongoing
Final exam	TBD

Final Exam Date: TBD

University Academic Calendar: <https://calendar.carleton.ca/academicyear/>

Policies & Accommodations

<https://students.carleton.ca/course-outline/>

<https://carleton.ca/pmc/current-students/academic-accommodations/>



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Additional Information on Deliverables and Grading

Each component of your grade will be assigned a percentage score. Your final course grade will be a weighted average of each of these components.

Simulation Business Plan and Presentation

This exercise requires students to think through and organize a comprehensive plan that integrates high-level strategic thinking and tactical and financial details. The executive team will present the business plan to venture capitalists (VCs) during the Venture Capital Fair (VC Fair) in Week 8. A meeting with the VCs demands that the executives articulate their strategy effectively and gives the firm an opportunity to receive additional funding to implement its strategy in the second half of the simulation. Detailed guidelines will be distributed in due time.

Simulation Performance

The Balanced Scorecard, a critical feature of the simulation, will be used to determine a firm's overall performance. Marketplace will generate a final score for each firm based on its financial performance, market performance, marketing effectiveness, manufacturing productivity, human resource management, investments in the firm's future, asset management, creation of wealth, and financial risk. The algorithm that generates the score takes into account a team's ranking in its respective game and how well the team performs in relation to those from past games.

Reflection on the Simulation

This assignment is aimed at facilitating practical and theoretical integration based on the student's experience with the simulation. This report must consist of two main parts. In the first part, describe the overall business goal(s) and the competitive landscape against which they formulated their strategy. Students need to explain the underlying principles of the firm's strategy. In the second part, students should critically assess their company's performance and business strategy, especially explaining whether the company has a competitive advantage. In addition, students need to explain whether the company's strategy is aligned with its strengths and weaknesses and if any strategic adjustments are needed. Most importantly, students must reflect on the theoretical and practical lessons they have learned from the simulation.

Case Write-ups

Each student is required to submit three case write-ups (one-page, single-spaced, Times New Roman, and 12-point font). You may choose any three of the cases taught between Week 2 and

Week 11. You may not choose any of the cases used in the flipped classroom exercise in Week 12. In a case write-up students analyze the subject firm's external and internal situations and formulate recommendations based on the strategic challenges facing the company. The write-ups should be prepared in a memo format from the perspective of the decision maker in the case. This individual assignment facilitates theoretical and practical learning by encouraging students to apply relevant concepts taught in the class to real-world problems. It also helps students develop deeper insights into the case material and prepare them for in-class discussion. Case write-ups must be submitted before the corresponding case is discussed in class.

Class Participation

Participating in class discussion, especially case studies, is an essential component of this course. Critical analysis and constructive criticism are prerequisites to both learning and action. I strive to create a "riskless" environment in which students can freely test their ideas and improve critical thinking and communication skills. The assessment of participation will be based on the quality and frequency of one's in-class comments. The following four-point scale guideline indicates how I evaluate individual contribution. Your final participation mark is determined by the recorded performance throughout the course.

Contribution		Examples
None	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not prepared for or not involved in class discussion
Basic	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responds to questions about case facts • Shows basic understanding of course concepts • Seeks or offers clarification of points raised by others
Moderate	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offers clear, concise analysis relevant to class discussion • Applies theoretical concepts to case materials • Builds on peer comments to advance class discussion
Advanced	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduces original ideas and supports them with theoretical concepts and case facts • Reflects deep and nuanced understanding of course concepts • Ties viewpoints together and suggests management implications

Final Exam

The final exam will test the student's knowledge of and the ability to apply key strategic concepts. The case document will be provided to students at the time of the exam.

The exam will be held during the exam period at the end of the term. Students are advised not to make travel arrangements until after their examinations have been scheduled. Make-up exams will be provided only for severe health-related reasons or other extenuating circumstances for which documentation is provided to, and accepted by, the MBA Program Office.

e-Proctoring: The University's e-proctoring system (CoMaS) will be used to administer the final exam. The exam is in-person, but we will still use this system as you will be writing using your laptops. Details about this system and your requirements will be laid out well before the exams so that you are ready. You can find more information at <https://carleton.ca/ses/e-proctoring/>.

Students are responsible for ensuring that the application works properly on your computer during the exam. Failure to ensure proper functioning of CoMaS will constitute a violation of the exam rules and may be grounds for an allegation that you have violated the Academic Integrity Policy.

The minimum computing requirements for e-proctoring service are as follows:

- Hardware: Laptop
- OS: Windows 10 or higher, Mac OS 10.14 or higher
- Internet Browser: Google Chrome, Mozilla Firefox, Apple Safari, or Microsoft Edge
- Webcam (HD resolution recommended)

Note: Tablets, Chromebooks and Smartphones are not supported at this time. Windows-based tablets are not supported at this time.

Additional Information on the Marketplace Simulation:

Team Formation

The executive teams will be formed via a sports-type draft on the first day. Each team will typically consist of four to five students. Procedural details will be explained in class.

Role on the Executive Team

Successful firms effectively divide up responsibility and share the workload. You will need to take on one or two of the following roles:

- VP Marketing
- VP Sales Management
- VP Human Resource
- VP Business Analytics
- VP Manufacturing
- VP Finance and Accounting

There should also be one person to lead the team – the President of the company. This person should also take on one of the functional roles. One of our goals is to develop leadership skills of all students. For this reason, every member should serve for a period as the president. The president's job is to manage the schedules and meetings, oversee the assignment of tasks, monitor overall performance (balanced scorecard) and help the team in every way possible to achieve strong business performance.

Executive Briefings

The Chairperson of the Board (instructor or teaching assistant) will meet periodically with each team (15-20 minutes). There will be one executive briefing for each of the six quarters in the simulation. During these executive briefings, the team will review its:

- performance during the prior quarter
- strategic analysis
- strategy for the upcoming quarter and going forward
- financial projections for the upcoming quarter.

Students must be prepared to explain the logic behind their decisions. The briefings are to be led by the President and a written agenda is required. The agenda should contain each topic to be addressed, the person responsible for it and the amount of time allocated to the topic.

Peer Evaluations

Three peer evaluations are to be completed throughout the simulation. Significant deviation in performance below the norm will be used to adjust individual grades for the activity being evaluated.

That is, the grade on the Business Plan and Simulation Performance could be adjusted depending upon the feedback the instructor receives from the rest of the team.

Workload

During the first three quarters of play, students report spending 2 to 3 hours of work per week. However, it will increase to 8 to 10 hours during the preparation of the Business Plan. Following the venture capital fair, most students report spending 1.5 to 2 hours of work per week. This reduction of time is due to familiarity with the software, game procedures, and market, and having a plan of action that requires modification rather than creation.

Time Management

Time management will be vital to your success in participating in the Venture Strategy simulation. There is more work than any one person can do. Also, it is not wise for everyone to participate in all aspects of the business. Therefore, it is necessary to divide the work strategically. There are suggestions on how to divide up the responsibility in the HELP files within the software. Feel free to depart from these guidelines if individual preferences, experiences, or workloads would allow a more equitable and effective allocation of tasks. Also, do not hesitate to reallocate responsibility if conflicts arise or the workload is unevenly distributed.

The president should preside over each executive meeting, making sure that the discussion does not wander from the business at hand. Each team meeting should begin with an agenda and a timetable. Meetings should not last more than two hours. Long drawn-out meetings are not productive and raise frustration levels about not getting things done. The meeting should conclude with a set of action items for each executive. The outcome of these actions should be reviewed at the start of the next meeting.

To facilitate executive meetings, each team member should prepare his/her work in advance. The executive should know the ins and outs, problems, and tradeoffs of his/her area of responsibility. When the executives meet, each executive should have a plan of action to recommend to the team. The executive should be prepared to thoroughly discuss the options open to the company and be flexible on the final decision of the executive team.

Late Assignments:

To ensure fairness for all students, penalties will be applied to late assignments: Failure to submit an assignment on time will result in an initial penalty of five (5) percentage points, followed by an additional (2) percentage points per day thereafter. For example, an assignment that would normally merit a grade of 80% would receive a grade of 75% if submitted after the deadline on the due date, 73% if submitted the following day, and so on. Requests for extension will be considered in cases of illness, family emergency, or other exceptional circumstances.

Preparation and Participation:

Refer to the *Grading Scheme* section for more details.

Contribution to Program Learning Goals ([MBA](#)):

MBA Learning Goal	Not Covered	Introduced	Taught but Not Assessed	Taught <u>and</u> Assessed
MB1 Leadership and Collaboration <i>Graduates will be equipped for leadership and collaboration.</i>				✓
MB2 Communication <i>Graduates will be effective communicators</i>				✓
MB3 Critical Thinking and Problem Solving <i>Graduates will be skilled in critical thinking and problem solving.</i>				✓
MB4 Functional Knowledge <i>Graduates will have functional knowledge of all areas of business.</i>				✓
MB5 Global Business <i>Graduates will have an appreciation of the global environment of business.</i>		✓		
MB6 Ethical Reasoning <i>Graduates will be skilled in ethical reasoning and decision-making.</i>		✓		

COURSE SCHEDULE

Date	Topic	Agenda/Readings	Pre-class Prep
Week 1, Sept 4	Introduction	<u>Readings:</u> Schoemaker, P., Krupp, S., & Howland, S. 2013. Strategic leadership: The essential skills. <i>Harvard Business Review</i> , 91(1/2): 131-134.	Job application form for simulation team formation
		Form teams for the simulation	
Week 2, Sept 11	Business model	<u>Readings:</u> Johnson, M., Christensen, C. M., & Kagermann, H. 2008. Reinventing your business model. <i>Harvard Business Review</i> , 86(12): 50-59. Almquist, E., Cleghorn, J., & Sherer, L. 2018. The B2B elements of value. <i>Harvard Business Review</i> , 96(2): 72-81.	
	Case study	<u>Case:</u> MoviePass: A Netflix for Moviegoers?	
Week 3, Sept 18	SWOT: External environment	<u>Readings:</u> Porter, M., 2008. The five competitive forces that shape strategy. <i>Harvard Business Review</i> , 86(1): 78-93. Sammut-Bonnici, T., & Galea, D. 2015. PEST analysis. In C. L. Cooper, J. McGee, & S.-B. T. (Eds.), Wiley Encyclopedia of Management.	Q1 decisions (Sept 16)
	Executive briefing	Key decisions and results of Q1 Plan for Q2	
Week 4, Sept 25	SWOT: Internal environment	<u>Readings:</u> Barney, J. 1995. Looking inside for competitive advantage. <i>Academy of Management Executive</i> , 9(4): 49-61. Collis, D., & Montgomery, C. 2008. Competing on resources. <i>Harvard Business Review</i> , 86(7/8): 140-150.	
	Case study	<u>Case:</u> Planet Fitness: No Judgements, No Lunks	
Week 5, Oct 2	Competitive advantage	<u>Readings:</u> Ghemawat, P. & Rivkin, J. 2006. Creating competitive advantage. Harvard Business Publishing. (This reading is in the coursepack) Porter, M. 1996. What is strategy? <i>Harvard Business Review</i> , 74(6): 61-78.	Q2 decisions (Sept 30)
	Executive briefing	Key decisions and results of Q2 Plan for Q3	
Week 6, Oct 9	Business plan	<u>Readings:</u> Magretta, J. 2002. Why business models matter. <i>Harvard Business Review</i> , 80(5): 86-92. Rich, S., & Gumpert, D. 1985. How to write a winning business plan. <i>Harvard Business Review</i> , 63(3): 156-166.	Q3 decisions (Oct 7)
	Executive briefing	Key decisions and results of Q3 Business plan	Peer evaluation #1 (Oct 7)
Exam Week, Oct 13 – Oct 17			
Fall Break, Oct 20 – Oct 24			

Week 7, Oct 30	Case study (Business strategy)	<u>Case:</u> Trader Joe's <u>Readings:</u> Porter, M. 1988. COMPETITIVE STRATEGY. "Michael Porter on Competitive Strategy: Reflections and Round Table Discussion." <i>European Management Journal</i> , 6(1): 2-9 Eisenhardt, K., & Sull, D. 2001. Strategy as simple rules. <i>Harvard Business Review</i> , 79(1): 106-116.	A draft of executive summary. A draft of pro forma income statement (Q4-Q6)
	Executive briefing	Preparation for the VC fair	
Week 8, Nov 6	Venture capital fair	Business plan presentation to venture capitalists	Business plan (Nov 6) Peer evaluation #2 (Nov 6)
Week 9, Nov 13	Case study (Business strategy)	<u>Case:</u> AutoNiche Inc.: Facing Up to Disruption <u>Readings:</u> Ghemawat, P. 1986. Sustainable advantage. <i>Harvard Business Review</i> , 64(5): 53-58. Rumelt, R. 2011. The perils of bad strategy. <i>McKinsey Quarterly</i> (June): 30-39.	Q4 decisions (Nov 11)
	Executive briefing	Key decisions and results of Q4 Plan for Q5	
Week 10, Nov 20	Case study (Strategic change)	<u>Case:</u> Netflix Moves into Ad-Supported Streaming <u>Readings:</u> Amit, R., & Zott, C. 2012. Creating value through business model innovation. <i>MIT Sloan Management Review</i> , 53(3): 41-49. Bingham, C., Eisenhardt, K., & Furr, N. 2011. Which Strategy When? <i>MIT Sloan Management Review</i> , 53(1): 71-77.	Q5 decisions (Nov 18)
	Executive briefings	Key decisions and results of Q5 Plan for Q6	
Week 11, Nov 27	Case study (Strategic innovation)	<u>Case:</u> SHEIN vs. Zara: Digital Transformation in the Fast-fashion Industry <u>Readings:</u> Kim, C., & Mauborgne, R. 2005. Blue ocean strategy: From theory to practice. <i>California Management Review</i> , 47(3): 105-121. McGrath, R. G. 2013. Transient advantage. <i>Harvard Business Review</i> , 91(6): 62-7	Q6 decisions (Nov 25) Peer evaluation #3 (Dec 27)
	Executive briefing	Key decisions and results of Q6	
Week 12, Dec 4	Case studies (flipped classroom)	<u>Cases:</u> Craig Manufacturing: The Commander Decision Barber Cardiosystems <u>Readings:</u> Lovallo, D., & Sibony, O. 2006. Distortions and deceptions in strategic decisions. <i>McKinsey Quarterly</i> (1): 18-29.	

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Course Sharing Websites:

Materials created for this course (including presentations and posted notes, labs, case studies, assignments and exams) remain the intellectual property of the author(s). They are intended for personal use and may not be reproduced or redistributed without prior written consent of the author(s).

Recommended Calculator for Examinations:

If you are purchasing a calculator, we recommend any one of the following options: Texas Instruments BA II Plus (including Pro Model), Hewlett Packard HP 12C (including Platinum model), Staples Financial Calculator, Sharp EL-738C & Hewlett Packard HP 10bII

Group Work:

The Sprott School of Business encourages group assignments. They provide you with opportunities to develop and enhance interpersonal, communication, leadership, followership and other group skills. Group assignments are also an effective way to learn integrative skills for putting together a complex task. Your professor may assign one or more group tasks, assignments, or projects in this course. Before embarking on a specific problem as a group, it is your responsibility to ensure that the problem is meant to be a group assignment and not an individual one.

Letter Grades:

In accordance with the Carleton University Undergraduate Calendar (p 34), the letter grades assigned in this course will have the following percentage equivalents:

A+ = 90-100	B+ = 77-79	C+ = 67-69	D+ = 57-59	F = Below 50
A = 85-89	B = 73-76	C = 63-66	D = 53-56	
A - = 80-84	B - = 70-72	C - = 60-62	D - = 50-52	

Grades entered by Registrar:

WDN = Withdrawn from the course

DEF = Deferred

Academic Regulations:

University rules regarding registration, withdrawal, appealing marks, and most anything else you might need to know can be found on the university's website, here:

<https://calendar.carleton.ca/grad/gradregulations/>

Requests for Academic Accommodation:

Carleton is committed to providing academic accessibility for all individuals. You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. The accommodation request processes, including information about the Academic Consideration Policy for Students in Medical and Other Extenuating Circumstances, are outlined on the Academic Accommodations website (students.carleton.ca/course-outline).

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request, the processes are as follows:

- **Pregnancy**

Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details, visit the Equity Services website: <https://carleton.ca/equity/wp-content/uploads/Student-Guide-to-Academic-Accommodation.pdf>

- **Religious Obligations**

Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details, visit the Equity Services website: <https://carleton.ca/equity/wp-content/uploads/Student-Guide-to-Academic-Accommodation.pdf>

- **Students with Disabilities**

If you have a documented disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation or contact your PMC coordinator to send your instructor your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term. You must also contact the PMC no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (if applicable). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with your instructor as soon as possible to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. <https://carleton.ca/pmc/>

- **Survivors of Sexual Violence**

As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and its survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy. For more information about the services available at the university and to obtain information about sexual violence and/or support, visit: <https://carleton.ca/sexual-violence-support/>

- **Student Activities**

Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, to both the individual student and the university, that result from participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation will be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. <https://carleton.ca/senate/wp-content/uploads/Accommodation-for-Student-Activities-1.pdf>

For more information on academic accommodation, please contact the departmental administrator or visit: <https://students.carleton.ca/course-outline/>

Academic Integrity:

Violations of academic integrity—presenting another's ideas, arguments, words or images as your own, using unauthorized material, misrepresentation, fabricating or misrepresenting research data, unauthorized co-operation or collaboration or completing work for another student—are a serious academic offence, weaken the quality of the degree, and will not be tolerated. Penalties may include; a grade of Failure on the submitted work and/or course; academic probation; a refusal of permission to continue or to register in a specific degree program; suspension from full-time studies; suspension

from all studies at Carleton; expulsion from Carleton, amongst others. Students are expected to familiarize themselves with and follow the Carleton University Student Academic Integrity Policy which is available, along with resources for compliance at: <https://carleton.ca/registrar/academic-integrity/>

Centre for Student Academic Support:

The Centre for Student Academic Support (CSAS) is a centralized collection of learning support services designed to help students achieve their goals and improve their learning both inside and outside the classroom. CSAS offers academic assistance with course content, academic writing and skills development. Visit CSAS on the 4th floor of MacOdrum Library or online at: <https://carleton.ca/csas/>

Other Important Information:

- Students must always retain a copy of all work that is submitted.
- All final grades are subject to the Dean's approval.
- For us to respond to your emails, we need to see your full name, CU ID, and the email must be written from your valid CARLETON address. Therefore, in order to respond to your inquiries, please send all email from your Carleton cmail account. If you do not have or have yet to activate this account, you can do so by visiting <https://carleton.ca/its/get-started/new-students-2/>