

**STRATEGIC CORPORATE AND INDUSTRY RESEARCH 38:578:507  
SPRING 2025**

Professor Ahmer Qadeer (ahmer.qadeer@rutgers.edu)

Monday 7:20 PM- 10:00 PM

Office hours available by appointment

**COURSE OVERVIEW**

Strategy is a broad concept that can be covered from multiple disciplines and applied in a variety of contexts and situations. Strategic development and planning is used in military, corporate, political, and legal organizations. This course aims to familiarize you with analytical techniques that aid strategic development and planning with a particular focus on examples from unions and social movement organizations that represent workers.

The curriculum and examples are drawn from my twenty-plus years of working as a research analyst, investigator, and organizer. However the course will also draw on literature from political science, management, sociology, economics, public policy, history and journalism to familiarize students with key ideas and analytical techniques.

The course is divided into three main sections along with introductory and concluding lectures. The three main sections will cover 1) industry analysis and competition, 2) researching firms and organizations, and 3) understanding working conditions and labor costs. In each section we will read literature on strategy development, examine case studies, and apply analytical techniques. Each student will undertake a project where they practice analytical techniques and hone their skills using a company as an example, this will be your final project.

**SMLR AND MLER LEARNING OBJECTIVE FOR THE COURSE**

***Demonstrate an understanding of how to apply knowledge necessary for effective work performance.***

**COURSE SPECIFIC LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

By the end of this course, students should have a foundational understanding of:

- Using methods of strategic research to evaluate employment relations or workplace issues.
- How strategic corporate and industry research is used by firms and unions.
- Academic literature on strategy development in industries and firms.
- How to present key strategic considerations.
- Methods for analyzing markets and industry concentration.

- Methods for analyzing firm performance and finances.
- Methods for analyzing working conditions and labor costs.

## COURSE COMPONENTS AND GRADING

Strategy development is multifaceted and can be covered from a variety of perspectives and disciplines. Grading in this class will assess your performance on using analytical techniques to inform strategy. This means you must both learn the analytical techniques and have an awareness of how to apply them. To use an analogy you must be able to select the right tool as well as know how to use the tool.

Your performance will be evaluated across a variety of measures with an emphasis on your ability to apply the techniques you learn in class to the company you are studying. Therefore your attendance and participation in class are crucial.

Course Component	Number of assignments	Share of final course grade
Reading journal entries	7 (Out of possible 10 weeks)	25%
Class participation and exercises	13	10%
Book review	1	25%
Draft presentation	1	15%
Final project and presentation	1	25%

### *Reading journal entries (25% of final grade)*

You will be asked to make a series of journal entries during the course. Journal entries are short writing assignments where you will be asked to reflect on the readings, the entries are due the day of class and should be approximately 150-300 words. These entries are reflective, the goal is not to summarize the reading, but to reflect on questions, issues, and ideas that the text generates for you. There is no reading reflection in the first week, the spring recess, week 10 or the last week so there are only a possible 10 journal entries and **you only need to complete entries for 7 of the 10 weeks**. The reading load for the course is not large so that you can spend more time engaging with the texts and writing reflections. **Please only write reflections on readings denoted with an asterisk, you only have to write reflections about one reading per week.**

### *Class participation (10% of final grade)*

You will be evaluated on your contribution to class, this is not just the amount of your participation but also the quality of your contribution to in-class discussions and sometimes your performance on in-class exercises.

#### *Book review (25% of final grade)*

You will have one book review to write that should be approximately 1500-2000 words in length and should cover the questions: How was strategic corporate and industry research used in this case? And what role did research play in developing overall strategy? A more thorough outline of the book review assignment will be presented in class. The book reviews are due March 3.

#### *Draft presentation (15% of final grade)*

A draft of your presentation is due on April 14 and should be approximately 15-20 slides. The presentation should use the techniques we have learned over the semester and you should be prepared to draw conclusions from the analysis you conduct. The draft presentation will receive feedback from me before your final presentation.

#### *Final project and presentation (25% of final grade)*

Your final project and presentation is a presentation and short memo that provides a strategic analysis of the company that you have chosen. A fuller description of expectations for the final project will be provided in class.

### **CLASS PROTOCOLS**

1. Participate! Classes are experimental spaces and fundamental to learning the material in this course is becoming an active member of the class. I encourage you to take risks, ask genuine questions, seek clarification, and explore ideas you're having. In an on-line class there are a variety of ways to participate including through the chat, verbally raising questions, and in the group work that you engage in.
2. If you're engaging in argument and disagreement (which is important for learning) I would encourage you to articulate the point of view you are addressing before offering your critique. This helps ensure that you understand someone else's point of view and makes sure the disagreement is not personalized.
3. Be kind and understanding. This means affording others the benefit of the doubt when they say something you may disagree with and refraining from making comments that are disparaging or don't have academic content.
4. Prepare for class. To meaningfully participate you should do the readings beforehand and take notes on them. Synthesize the material so that you have insights or questions you want to raise before class. In-class reading sessions will be used to review material before discussing it. Even though we will have time to read some short articles in class I

would encourage you to at least skim the articles before class so that you are using the in-class time to refine your thinking rather than reading material for the first time.

## **STATEMENT ON AI USAGE**

You may use AI programs e.g. ChatGPT to help generate ideas and brainstorm. However, you should note that the material generated by these programs may be inaccurate, incomplete, or otherwise problematic. Beware that use may also stifle your own independent thinking and creativity. You may NOT submit any work generated by an AI program as your own. Additionally, you may NOT submit/enter course rubrics to an AI program to generate any course work, including journal responses, discussions, papers, or other assignments. If you include material generated by an AI program, you MUST cite like any other reference material (with due consideration for the quality of the reference, which may be poor).

Any AI generated plagiarism or other form of cheating will be dealt with according to the Rutgers student code of conduct policy.

## **READING AND COURSE SCHEDULE**

### Week 1. January 27: Course overview and learning objectives

In-class readings: Class syllabus, Dirtiggers guide to Corporate Research, 24 Questions Corporate Research project.

*Books to review will be discussed in this class.*

### Week 2. February 3: What do we mean by strategic? How do we evaluate strategies?

Readings:

\*What is Strategy? , Michael Porter, Harvard Business Review 17-34.

\*Practical Radicals, Deepak Bhargava and Stephanie Luce 1-43

\*March on the boss, How Corporate Intelligence is Reshaping the World, Tyler Maroney, 217-246

In-class reading: The Strategy Concept I: Five Ps for Strategy, Henry Mintzberg 1-14.

### Part I: Understanding industry analysis and competition

Week 3. February 10: What defines an industry? What is this important for companies and unions?

Readings:

- \*Economic Analysis and Industrial Structure, Douglas Needham, 1-22.
- \*The Size Distribution of Business Firms. Simon, Herbert A., and Charles P. Bonini. *The American Economic Review* 48, no. 4 (1958): 607-617

In-class reading: Stephen Lerner "Let's get moving: labor's survival depends on organizing industry-wide for justice and power," *Labor Research Review*, 18, 2, 1–16

Week 4. February 17: How do we analyze industry structure?

Readings:

- Industrial Organization Contemporary Theory, Lynne Peppal and George Norman, 43-67.
- \*The Laws of Returns Under Competitive Conditions. Piero Sraffa" *The Economic Journal* 36, no. 144 (1926): 535-550

In-class reading: Lerner, S. (2007) "Global unions: a solution to labor's worldwide decline," *New Labor Forum* 16,1 (Winter), 23–37.

Week 5. February 24: Finding and using industry data and measures

Readings:

- The IBIS guide to industry research pages 1- 30
- \*2023 Merger Guidelines Department of Justice and Federal Trade Commission 1-53

In-class reading: 2023 Merger Guidelines Department of Justice and Federal Trade Commission

Week 6. March 3: Who sets the rules for industries and markets?

BOOK REVIEW IS DUE.

Readings:

- \*Power. Bowles, Samuel, and Herbert Gintis. University of Massachusetts Economics Department Working Paper 37 (2007). 17 pages  
[https://scholarworks.umass.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1039&context=econ\\_workingpaper](https://scholarworks.umass.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1039&context=econ_workingpaper)
- \**The Economic Institutions of Capitalism: Firms, Markets, Relational Contracting*. Oliver Williamson, The Free Press (1985), pp. 15-63.

In-class readings: AT&T & T-mobile brief Communications Workers of America & review of slides from Understanding industry analysis and competition section

Part II: Researching firms and organizations

Week 7. March 10: What are firms and why do they exist?

Readings:

- \*What is a corporation?, Corporate Governance, Nell Minow and Robert Monks, pages 3-19
- \*The Nature of the Firm, Ronald Coase *Economica*, 4, no. 16 (1937): 386-440

In-class reading: Understanding Wall Street, Jeffrey Little and Lucien Rhodes, pages 1-14.

Week 8. March 17: Spring Recess

Week 9: March 24: How do we analyze a firms' performance?

Readings:

- \*Understanding Wall Street, Jeffrey Little and Lucien Rhodes, pages 15-80.
- In-class reading: Understanding Wall Street, Jeffrey Little and Lucien Rhodes, pages 37-56.

Week 10 . March 31: What does financial analysis tell us about a firm?

*\*No reading journal entry this week*

Readings:

- Understanding Wall Street, Jeffrey Little and Lucien Rhodes, pages 37-56.
- The Merrill Lynch Guide to Understanding Financial Analysis 1-47

In-class reading: Unionist Dissects financial Failings of Santa Fe Gaming

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB928706866907941722>

Week 11. April 7: Shareholders, stakeholders, and corporate governance

Readings:

- \*Shareholders Ownership Corporate Governance, Nell Minow and Robert Monks, pages 3-19
- \*Directors: Monitoring, Nell Minow and Robert Monks, pages 251-300
- \*Management Performance, Nell Minow and Robert Monks, pages 347-380

In-class reading: Business Roundtable Statement of Purpose of a Corporation

*Part III: Understanding working conditions and labor costs*

Week 12. April 14: Analyzing labor markets

DRAFT PRESENTATION IS DUE

Readings: \*Labor Market Competition: Framing the Issues, Jared Bernstein and Ben Harris 25-54

\*Labor Market Concentration, José Azar Ioana Marinescu Marshall I. Steinbaum, 1-34.

In-class readings: UPMC Hospital Monopsony complaint, Strategic Organizing Center 1-57.

Week 13. April 21: Analyzing labor costs

Readings:

\*Contract Bargaining Handbook for Union Leaders, Maurice Better 161-175.

\*Prevailing wage policy for non agricultural workers, Department of Labor 1-10,

In-class reading: 32BJ Market analysis of janitorial labor costs

Week 14. April 28: Final presentations