

# Strategy

Winter Semester 2019/20  
Tuesdays, 12:00-14:00h. Room: see UWE  
First Session: October 15, 2019. Final Session: January 28, 2020

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This course provides an overview of organizational strategy. We introduce two distinct perspectives: strategy as an instrument and strategy as human behaviour. First, you will learn how to analyse the strategic position of an organization and how to think about strategic choices. Second, you will learn about recent sociologically informed concepts in strategy research (e.g., strategy-as-practice). After successful completion of this module, you will be able to apply concepts and ideas from strategic management commonly used in organizations, critically discuss traditional heuristics for strategy making, and reflect upon the practice of strategy making itself.

## Learning objectives:

Upon completion of this course, you will be able to

- **elaborate** on the roles of strategy for organizations;
- **apply** different strategy tools to different decision situations;
- **understand** strategy instruments as means to cope with complexity;
- **see** strategy not only as a set of decisions, but a process of organizational sense-making;
- **reflect** on the emergent and distributed aspects of organizational strategy;
- **navigate** the structure and content of scientific articles from strategy research.

## Course requirements:

Due to the seminaristic design of this course, teaching success is contingent on active class participation. To facilitate our conversation, you are required to do course readings and think about possible discussion questions every week prior to the seminar. Your grade will be based on a written final exam (100%).

## **Core text and supplementary readings:**

This seminar is structured around the core textbook:

Johnson, G., Whittington, R., Angwin, D., Regner P., & Scholes, K. (2017): *Exploring Strategy: Text & Cases*, 11<sup>th</sup> edition, Harlow: Pearson.

A digital version of the book is available in the UWH electronic university library.<sup>1</sup> If you prefer a printed copy, we recommend buying the book. However, please note that there is also a hardcopy available in the RMI library (Room E.94), which you can borrow on short term to make copies or scans. Any other readings will be made available through Moodle. Please make sure that you are enrolled to this seminar on Moodle to access the texts. If you experience any problems, please let us know.

This is a course that requires you to work outside of class *every week*, but the amount of work per week will be manageable. It will also pay off, e.g. when you prepare for the final exam. We highly recommend planning your readings in advance (e.g., put “Reading for Strategy” in your weekly timetable). Participation in class will enhance your reading comprehension and vice versa. Hence it is essential that you read and participate continuously. Most weeks you will have to read one or two textbook chapters and an academic paper or a case study. The textbook chapters are written in an engaging style and cover a broad range of issues each. The academic papers can be more difficult but they give you insights into cutting-edge research. The case studies will help you connect the theoretical concepts we discuss with real-world scenarios.

Lively discussions on strategy literature are at the heart of this seminar. To be able to participate in the discussion you need a fundamental understanding of the different texts. As a structured way to acquire this understanding you are asked to come prepared to every session with notes on which aspects in the readings you would like to discuss deeper or further. Sessions will usually begin with small-group exchanges for developing discussion questions that will structure the main part of the session. The instructors may introduce additional activities or devote time to explaining important concepts, if needed.

## **Final exam:**

You will take a final exam in February during the main examination period. The exam will take 90 minutes and consist of four essay-type questions from which you will have to answer three. The questions relate to the readings and discussions from class and may contain small case studies. The questions do not require you to memorize all details from the different academic papers we discuss in class. Rather you need to show a good understanding of the core concepts and an ability to answer questions that intersect more than one concept. Practicalities of the exam will be explained in class. The session on January 21, 2020 will be devoted to exam preparation.

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<sup>1</sup> You can access the book directly here: <https://ezproxy.uni-wh.de/login?url=https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/uni-wh/detail.action?docID=5833391>

# Schedule

## 1) Oct 15 *What is strategy?*

Johnson, G. et al. (2017) *Exploring Strategy*. **Chapter 1:** Introducing strategy (pp. 2–23).

Carter, C. et al. (2008) *A Very Short, Fairly Interesting and Reasonably Cheap Book About Studying Strategy*, London: Sage. Introduction “Once Upon a Time...” (pp. 1–19).

## Strategic Position

## 2) Oct 22 *What’s outside the firm*

Johnson, G. et al. (2017) *Exploring Strategy*. **Chapter 2:** Macro-environment analysis; **Chapter 3:** Industry and sector analysis (pp. 32–89).

Porter, M. E. 2008. The five competitive forces that shape strategy. *Harvard Business Review*, 86(1), pp. 78–93.

## 3) Oct 29 *What’s inside the firm*

Johnson, G. et al. (2017) *Exploring Strategy*. **Chapter 4:** Resources and capabilities (pp. 96–125).

Wilhelm, H., Schlömer, M., & Maurer, I. (2015) How dynamic capabilities affect the effectiveness and efficiency of operating routines under high and low levels of environmental dynamism. *British Journal of Management*, 26(2), pp. 327–345.

## 4) Nov 5 *What’s past the firm*

Johnson, G. et al. (2017) *Exploring Strategy*. **Chapter 5:** Stakeholders and governance; **Chapter 6:** History and culture (pp. 132–185).

Ferguson, J.-P., Dudley, T., & Soule, S. A. (2018) Osmotic mobilization and union support during the long protest wave, 1960–1995. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 63(2), pp. 441–477.

## Strategic Choice

### 5) Nov 12 *How to compete in a given market*

Johnson, G. et al. (2017) *Exploring Strategy*. **Chapter 7:** Business strategy and models.

Cole, B. M., & Chandler, D. (2019) A model of competitive impression management: Edison versus Westinghouse in the war of the currents. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, online first.

### 6) Nov 19 *How to compete across different output markets*

Johnson, G. et al. (2017) *Exploring Strategy*. **Chapter 8:** Corporate strategy and diversification (pp. 208–269).

Jung, J. & Shin, T. 2019. Learning not to diversify: The transformation of graduate business education and the decline of diversifying acquisitions. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 64(2), pp. 337–369.

### 7) Nov 26 *How to compete across different geographical markets*

Johnson, G. et al. (2017) *Exploring Strategy*. **Chapter 9:** International strategy (pp. 276–301).

Fortwengel, J. (2016) Should we stay or should we go? Target and the question of internationalization. Case study.

### 8) Dec 03 *How to grow a company organically*

Johnson, G. et al. (2017) *Exploring Strategy*. **Chapter 10:** Entrepreneurship and Innovation (pp. 308–332).

Guest: Tim Dapprich (Co-founder and CEO, isaac nutrition GmbH)

### 9) Dec 10 *How to grow a company inorganically*

Johnson, G. et al. (2017) *Exploring Strategy*. **Chapter 11:** Mergers, acquisitions and alliances (pp. 338–363).

Malhotra, S., Reus, T. H., Zhu, P., & Roelofsen, E. M. (2018) The acquisitive nature of extraverted CEOs. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 63(2), pp. 370–408.

## Strategy in Action

### 10) Dec 17 *Strategy as process*

Johnson, G. et al. (2017) *Exploring Strategy*. **Chapter 13:** Strategy development processes (pp. 374–432).

Gond, J. P. et al. (2018) How do things become strategic? ‘Strategifying’ corporate social responsibility. *Strategic Organization*, 16(3), 241–272.

**11) Jan 07** *Organising and strategy*

Johnson, G. et al. (2017) *Exploring Strategy*. **Chapter 14:** Organising and strategy (pp. 438–467).

Jarzabkowski, P., Lê, J., & Balogun, J. (2019). The social practice of coevolving strategy and structure to realize mandated radical change. *Academy of Management Journal*, 62(3): 850–882.

**12) Jan 14** *Strategy as practice*

Johnson, G. et al. (2017) *Exploring Strategy*. **Chapter 16:** The practice of strategy (pp. 498–523).

Wenzel, M., & Koch, J. (2018). Strategy as staged performance: A critical discursive perspective on keynote speeches as a genre of strategic communication. *Strategic Management Journal*, 39(3), 639–663.

**13) Jan 21** *Opening strategy*

Whittington, R. et al. (2011) Opening strategy: Evolution of a precarious profession. *British Journal of Management*, 22(3), 531–544.

Dobusch, L., Dobusch, L., & Müller-Seitz, G. (2019) Closing for the benefit of openness? The case of Wikimedia's open strategy process. *Organization Studies*, 40(3): 343–370.

**Exam**

**14) Jan 28** *Exam preparation*

We will discuss the practicalities of the exam and work on one exemplary question. At this point you should have already started revising the readings for the final exam. This will also help you to raise open questions.