

## **BUS 4900: Business Policy Seminar**

Carthage College

Spring 2017

Instructor: Jan P. Owens, M.L.A., M.B.A., Ph.D.  
Office: Carthage-in-Chicago and Clausen #239  
Office email: [jowens@carthage.edu](mailto:jowens@carthage.edu)  
Office phone: 262.551.2111

Office Hours: MF: 10 – 11:30 and 2 – 3.  
Tu: 11:30 – 2; after 4:10  
W: 10 – 11:30  
Th: After 4:10

Before and after class, and by appointment.

Required: *Competitive Strategy: Techniques for analyzing Industries and Competitors*, by Michael Porter. Free Press. Originally published 1980, and subsequent editions.

*HBR's 10 Must Reads On Strategy*. Harvard Business Review Press. 2011.

Additional readings as assigned (no additional cost)

Access to [www.lynda.com](http://www.lynda.com) and OneNote for Microsoft Excel Certification training and practice exams.

Access to high quality sources of news about the business world, e.g. *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, *The Economist*, *Bloomberg News*, etc. Online or hard copy.

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

Business Policy Seminar is a capstone course for seniors majoring in Business. It is designed to integrate their knowledge across the curriculum. This course is a seminar style requiring students to bear a significant degree of responsibility in the development and delivery of the content. All students will complete a senior thesis; a thesis presentation; and assignments that reflect a diversity of business issues and topics. This is a writing intensive course as required by the curriculum.

**PLEASE NOTE:** Use of laptops, cell phones, PDA's, and other electronic communication devices are not permitted during class time unless otherwise directed by the instructor. Turn your cellphone off; you will lose the daily points if it rings in class.

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

1. Demonstrate the ability to identify and investigate an important issue, study focus, or project to solve a business issue or problem. The student will submit a proposal and subsequent thesis/project that uses significant research to analyze the issue/study/project and explain a resolution.
2. Demonstrate effective written and oral communication skills.
3. Enhance existing knowledge of the writing process through the use of editing and revision.

4. Integrate knowledge learned in this and previous business classes into insightful, substantive points of view.
5. Demonstrate critical thinking skills in the thesis and class discussions.
6. Demonstrate competence in basic Excel functions, with the expectation of passing the Microsoft Excel Certification exam.

If you have a documented disability that affects your learning, please see me during the first two weeks of class to discuss support and accommodations. You also need to meet with and provide documentation to Diane Schowalter in the Advising Center, x5802. This information will be kept confidential.

### **COURSE EVALUATION**

Final grades for the course will be based on the criteria shown below. Grades will be posted on eLearning, but you can keep track of your performance in the “Earned” column below.

<b>Assignment</b>	<b>Points</b>	<b>Earned</b>
5 Thought reflections @10	50	
5 Excel Quizzes @2	10	
Microsoft Excel Practice Exam	30	
Thesis topic and brief explanation	10	
Introductory Paragraph	20	
Three Thesis-related Articles	30	
Thesis Outline	10	
One page	10	
Two pages	20	
Five pages	35	
Ten pages	35	
First draft	100	
Final draft	75	
Presentation	35	
Participation 15 + 10	25	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>500</b>	

**Grades:** A: 93% and above; A- = 90-92%; B+ = 87-89%; B = 83-86%; B- = 80-82%; C+ = 77-79%; C = 73-76%; C- = 70-72%; D = 65-69%; F = 65% or below.

## **EXPLANATION OF ASSIGNMENTS**

**For all written assignments: professional business writing style is expected at all times: concise, to-the-point, well-organized, consistent with the rules of good grammar and spelling, proof-read, etc. Points may be deducted for documents that do not comply with this expectation.**

### **READING ASSIGNMENTS**

Good employees should have a working knowledge of how companies succeed, and a point of view in decision-making. It is important to know “the big picture” of a company and its environment, and the detail-oriented tactics for good execution. The readings are classic texts written by acknowledged business authorities that many managers have read in their graduate work.

Please read the assigned chapters to be discussed on the dates shown in the course calendar. Please write the answers or comments to the accompanying questions for each assignment that will be found on eLearning. These are due by midnight of the night before class. You may also bring and written comments or print-outs to class, but the eLearning postings will be the basis of the grades.

These assignments form the basis of class discussion. Students who do not attend the respective class will forfeit credit for that assignment unless the instructor has allowed an exception.

Examples of typical assignment questions are:

1. Briefly comment about a company or business situation in the current news that is an example of a situation described in the chapter(s.) This should be concise but informative. For example: “J.C. Penney recently had to back-track on its no-sales, always-the-low price strategy when store sales declined significantly. Their customers expected discounts and sales in fashion-related merchandise through the seasons. According to Michael Porter’s framework, Penney’s did not clearly understand the buying behavior of its customers.
2. Give an example of a situation described in this chapter relevant to a key concept discussed in the chapter.
3. Describe a product or company that demonstrates a differentiation strategy, and explain why it is a good example of this strategy.
4. Describe a company in “the sharing economy.” How has this company changed the rules of competition in its industry?
5. Is there a company in the news that has received negative publicity for its business practices? What is the issue and why did the company pursue that strategy? Which constituency did it satisfy, and which did it offend? Explain your reasoning.

### **MICROSOFT CERTIFICATION TRAINING AND VERIFICATION.**

Knowledge of Excel is an expected and valuable tool in today’s work environment. Graduates of Carthage College will demonstrate their competence in Excel by viewing the training videos on Lynda.com, completing practice exams, and taking the Microsoft Certification Exam as arranged on April 5, 2017, during the Assessment Period. Please see the course calendar for scheduled practice exams. Students who get at least 70% of the exam questions correct will be certified by the Microsoft for Excel at the basic level.

We have prepared a OneNote workbook at the following link that will orient you to the exam, how to access the Lynda.com tutorials and practice exams, and information about signing up for the actual exam on April 5.

<https://onedrive.live.com/view.aspx?resid=5EE3D9CA7CF53F38!29835&ithint=onenote%2c&app=OneNote&authkey=!ACWFSpQfdNr1BKs>

The link for Microsoft Certification Training is found on Lynda.com at:

<https://www.lynda.com/Excel-tutorials/Excel-2013-Prepare-Microsoft-Office-Specialist-Certification-Exam-77-420/439680-2.html>

A practice test can be found at the end of the videos that simulates an actual Excel Certification exam. It is a 50-minute challenge. The first “challenge” can be found at this link. NOTE: you must be signed into Lynda.com to view it.

<https://www.lynda.com/Excel-tutorials/Challenge-Worksheets-workbooks/439680/487054-4.html>

To note: there are also good review tutorials on Youtube at:

Microsoft Excel 2013 Review (MOS Exam) Part 1: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ANiHz-UuAhU>

Microsoft Excel 2013 Review (MOS Exam) Part 2: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bx12k8-pgmU>

## **SENIOR THESIS**

A major component in this seminar is writing and presenting a good thesis or thesis project. The thesis represents a focused conceptualization, research, and analysis of an interesting and important issue or problem in business. The student will work with the instructor to select an appropriate topic or project.

The thesis will be about 10 pages long single-spaced,\* with 15 high-quality reference sources.\*\* The paper should be formatted in 11-point type size. While the format of the theses may vary depending on the topic chosen, the thesis will include: a title page/cover; an introductory paragraph; discussion and explanation of the topic with appropriate subheadings; conclusion/managerial recommendations; and references cited. Projects will follow a format appropriate for that type of project. Thesis topics could include any of the following:

1. Traditional “library” research of an important topic in business. Pick an appropriate business topic or industry analysis and become an expert on it. This thesis should be deep and extensive enough that it could serve as a book chapter on the topic.
2. Field projects, such as a promotional plan for a real business. If you can find a client, you can be a consultant on a “deliverable” project. The deliverables will be jointly determined by you, the client, and Dr. Owens.
3. Business plans. It’s difficult for most students to do a good, comprehensive business plan in a single semester. However, some students have completed the foundation of a business plan in other classes, and you may be able to convince me that you have something appropriate to fully develop.

4. Original research. There may not be enough time for collection and analysis of primary data, but there could be good secondary sources that can be used to address an original business research question. But this is possible.
5. Thesis from another class. If you are a double-major, it is possible that your thesis can satisfy both departments. To satisfy the requirement for this course, the thesis should have significant business-related content.

\* Many “live” projects look better in a more professional, single-spaced format. I expect projects like a marketing communications plan to be about 10 single-spaced pages, not including examples of ad or text copy, etc.

\*\* This is a minimum, but an estimate. If completing a “live” project, there should be some research about trends affecting the industry; some references from relevant data sources, e.g. target population residing in Kenosha; etc.

An acceptable thesis project will be able to answer two questions: Who cares? Why do they care?

**The thesis will be developed in the steps shown below. Once you start to write the thesis, include the previous graded assignment with your hand-in. For example, when you hand in the 2-page assignment, attach the graded 1-page assignment from the previous hand-in.**

#### Specific Thesis Assignments

Thesis statement and justification. Describe the topic of your thesis. Try to identify the proposed title of the thesis. In a few sentences, describe why this thesis is important and/or if interest to a business community.

Three references. To get the research started, find three references from substantive, relevant books or publications that provide insight or relevant information about the thesis topic. Each reference should provide the full citation in a standard format, then bullet points for each source describing key points of information that will likely be used in the thesis.

Introductory Paragraph. This “sets the scene” of your paper. It should identify the topic; describe why it is important to its intended audience; briefly describe the major parts of the thesis that will follow.

Thesis Outline. Create an outline of your thesis. Subheadings should identify the major topics that will be describe/discussed/addressed in your project.

One Page. Write the first page of the thesis. This should include an introduction that identifies the topic, and why it is important, as in an earlier assignment. There should be a smooth transition to the section that starts the body of the thesis.

Two Pages. Write the first two pages of the thesis. This should include an introduction that identifies the topic, and why it is important, as in an earlier assignment (edited or re-written as needed.)

Five Pages. This is the longer version of two pages, although it could include the key paragraphs of sections throughout the paper. For example, if you are doing a promotional plan for a local restaurant, you may have a later section (website redesign) more complete than an earlier section (sales

promotions.) The five pages should build on (and include, with possible editing) the two pages previously submitted.

Ten Pages. This is the longer version of five pages. This assignment should largely reflect the body of your thought and your thesis/project, and should build on (include, with possible editing) the five pages previously submitted.

First draft. The first draft of the thesis is turned in. This should include all the parts that are relevant to your specific types of thesis or project. Typically, a traditional thesis will include a title page; introduction; problem identification; discussion of the topic with appropriate subheadings (major body of the paper;) managerial recommendations/solutions; bibliography. A traditional thesis should have at least 15 references, but a promotional plan could have fewer (e.g. articles about the trends in the industry; local news.)

The first draft is a refined first attempt at the thesis, and should be almost the length of the final paper. Emphasis will be on research, content, and analysis, rather than mechanical issues, but the latter will still be a component of evaluation. Following a discussion with the professor as needed, improvements or changes will be made.

Final draft. This draft should be a revision of the thesis that was previously turned in. This should include all the sections noted above in the first draft explanation.

Thesis Presentation. This is the final. Present the thesis to the class and any other visitors. Be prepared to answer questions regarding this topic.

### **CLASS PARTICPATION**

A seminar class is based on active discussion and participation of its members. Students are expected to come prepared to discuss that day's topic.

Students are allowed to miss up to 4 class sessions (seniors lead complicated lives) for any reason before points will be deducted from the class participation grade (15.) Students are expected to attend all thesis presentations. This is an all-or-nothing grade: 10 points or 0, unless a special case is discussed in advance with Dr. Owens. Please note: wanting to get a head-start on a vacation is not a valid excuse.

## OTHER PERTINENT INFORMATION:

1. All hard copy assignments should be submitted with the following identifying information, unless otherwise requested:

Student's Name

Course, e.g. BUS 4900

Date

Assignment Title, e.g. Two Pages – Thesis

**ALL thesis-related assignments should have a line that tries to formulate the thesis title**, e.g. "A Study of the Computer Gaming Industry."

2. The instructor reserves the right to refuse to accept any student assignment that is turned in late. Assignments that are turned in late, and accepted, will receive, at most, half of the available points. Written assignments that are not typed will receive a zero unless specified by the instructor.
3. Any cheating, plagiarism, or other cases of dishonesty will incur my wrath. Expect that such activities will receive no credit for that assignment with no opportunity for remediation. I follow the College's Community Code. I will report such transgressions to the Dean of Students and other appropriate parties, e.g. coaches.
4. You should expect your instructor to:
  - be prepared for every class
  - be respectful of you and your fellow students
  - be a careful and attentive listener
  - be available outside of class for consultation
  - take your questions seriously
  - evaluate your work promptly, critically, and impartially
5. Your instructor should expect that you:
  - come to class prepared to contribute positively to class discussions
  - be respectful of him/her and your fellow students
  - be a careful and attentive listener
  - take the individual and team assignments seriously
  - contribute equally – i.e., "pull your own weight" ...in class discussion
  - provide helpful and constructive feedback during the semester
6. I do not give extra credit assignments or curve grades.
7. The syllabus and assignment calendar may change at the discretion of the instructor.
8. Late assignments may be evaluated, but there will be a loss of at least half the points.
9. I only grade hard copies of assignment, due at the beginning of class, unless otherwise indicated.

Please adhere to accepted codes of professional conduct in class: cell phones and other PDA's should be turned off; comments in class should be directed to the group, i.e. no side-conversations with a neighbor, etc. If you need to leave a class early, or enter the class late, please do so as quietly as possible and choose a seat by the door. **Finally: I expect mature adults in this class, which means that all hats should be removed.**