MBA 628  
Business Strategy: Information Technology  
Fall 2006  
Department of Information Systems and Operations Management  
The Bryan School of Business  
University of North Carolina, Greensboro

Professor: Dr. Ruth C. King     Phone: 334-4989  
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Class Room: 226 Bryan Building  
Class Time: Monday 6:30pm -9:20pm  
Office Hours: Wednesday 4-6pm  
Mail Box: 479 Bryan Building

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Information technology (IT) has become entrenched in many aspects of how we define business, 
execute strategy and manage the organization. IT is viewed as one of the critical success factors for 
organizations to achieve competitive advantage. This class will focus on issues that are strategic to 
business and IT leaders. Topics such as the role of IT, business-IT alignment, business intelligence, 
IT innovations, IT enabled process organization, IT portfolio management and IT outsourcing will 
be addressed. The goal of this course is to familiarize students with the potential opportunities and 
transformational nature of IT and to equip students with a balanced and informed view and 
approach to managing IT in organizations.

CLASS FORMAT:

This course involves three major in-class activities. The first part is the current event update 
session. The second part is the instructor-led discussion session, and the third part is the group-
led discussion session based on assigned readings. There is no guarantee in which order these 
activities will take place at each class.

For the current event update session, six students (one group) per week present articles 
(1-2 pages) from business or IT journals, magazines or newspapers that are related to IT and 
business at the strategic level and are aligned with the topic of that week. You are required to (1) 
submit your summarized points in PowerPoint format to me 12 hours prior to the class and (2) post 
your article on the class Blackboard (under the Discussion Board category and use the title of the 
article, source and date as the file name, eg. 10 Hot IT Trends, WSJ, 08 14 2006) also 12 hours prior 
to the class time. Each event presentation will be allocated 4~5 minutes and will be strictly 
enforced. (The clock starts ticking from the moment you are called to the moment you leave the 
podium). Please convey your message and use your airtime effectively. You will be graded based 
on (1) whether your information is relevant, informative and interesting, (2) your management of 
time is effective and (3) your posting of the information is punctual. You only have one 
opportunity to perform this activity, prepare well.

For the group-led assigned reading discussion session, your group will be assigned 1-2 
papers to present in class. These articles are listed on your syllabus. Group members (can be 
presented by one person or more) will be responsible to lead the discussion of the assigned paper. 
Please prepare your presentation using PowerPoint slides. In addition, groups are to prepare a write-
up of approximately one page for distribution to the class. Approximately 2/3 of the write-up should
summarize the main issues addressed in the article, the basis for the argument and the recommendations. The remaining 1/3 should include your evaluation of the article: your thoughts about how it contributes to the current thinking of the topic, the quality of the solutions to the problems, and your thoughts about how the issues can be addressed or dealt with differently and more convincingly. You are required to (1) distribute copies of your write-up to the class, (2) create 6 questions from the readings (multiple choices, short essays or blank fillings) and (3) post your PowerPoint file, questions and write-up on the class Blackboard (under the Course Readings category and the corresponding week) 12 hours before the class time. Each discussion session will be allocated with 25-30 minutes and will be strictly enforced. Your entire group will be evaluated based on (1) whether you have brought up all the important points from the article, (2) your additional elaboration on key points with insightful remarks or related experience and (3) stimulating interesting discussion among your peers in addition to the 3 criteria mentioned in the current event update session.

For the instructor-led discussion session, we will discuss main points from the assigned business cases and incorporate them with the assigned reading material so that you can gain a comprehensive and integrated understanding of the topic discussed.

CLASS MATERIAL:

There will be no textbook used in this class. However, if you don’t have a strong IT background, a good reference book is highly recommended: Managing & Using Information Systems, A Strategic Approach, 2006, Pearson and Saunders, 3rd edition, Wiley Publishing, ISBN-13 978-0-471-71538-2. All other reading material (Except the Harvard Cases) will be distributed to you via Blackboard. Harvard cases can be purchased from the EUC. You are also encouraged to send relevant information to the instructor to be posted on the Blackboard.

CLASS PARTICIPATION:

Attendance does count toward your class participation. If you miss more than one class, your final grade will be penalized. You are also expected to come to class prepared to discuss all assigned readings, to lead the class, to seek answers or additional materials that enrich or broaden your understanding of the topics. Quality of the contribution is more important than the quantity of the participation. Long winding rambling is not considered effective communication or active participation. Please be sensitive and conscientious about how you use the airtime since we only have 160 minutes per week to learn one topic.

CASE ASSIGNMENTS:

There are five business cases for this class. Questions for each case will be posted on the Blackboard no later than one week before the due date. You will be working on your own to analyze the case questions and prepare the write-up. You are expected to articulate your points in class for all questions given but you are only required to turn in your analysis for one question. Please present your answers as succinctly and clearly as possible (one-page per question) and be creative when presenting your thoughts and ideas. Use tables, figures, outline forms (with catchy phrases to highlight the points and 3-4 sentences to substantiate your points effectively. Verbose paragraph is strongly discouraged. Present your answer as if you were to present the recommendations/solutions to your senior manager and s/he has already known as many facts as
you do, so don’t repeat or merely present the facts from the case. The analysis report is due at the beginning of the class. Late assignments will not be accepted.

INVESTIGATIVE REPORT:

You and your team will complete an investigative report (about 6 pages, single-spaced, and includes tables, figures and at least 5 references) for the course. The topic of the paper is up to you and your team members. You may choose, for example, to develop an in-depth critique of a particular issue as discussed in class; expose critical and non-obvious inconsistencies between two common approaches or practices; pursue an in-depth comparative study of an IT strategic planning process in a few companies or an IT application (CRM, ERP or SCM) concerning its development process, functions and impact in workplace; and/or conduct an empirical study and collect and analyze real data. The paper must contain some cases, interview results or real data. In evaluating your paper, my central criteria will be: how important are the ideas or empirical findings that you generate for advancing the understanding of IT strategy and management. The work must advance well beyond a simple literature review. You must use this paper as an opportunity to push the current thinking of the topic forward. A one page proposal outlining your topic is due on the fourth week of class (9/9/2006). I will not grade your outline but simply use it as a means to assist you with your pursuit of the investigation. You will present your report on the last week of your class.

Your final written paper and power point file (both hard and soft copies) are due no later than 5pm, Thursday, September 25, 2006.

FINAL EXAMINATION:

A comprehensive final examination will be given on the last day of the class.

WRITTEN WORK:

When material is submitted for evaluation it should be in suitable form. Written work should be typed. Neatness and clarity of presentation is expected in all work. When turning in your report, please do not use any additional fancy cover. A staple on the left top corner of the document will be sufficient. Your cover page should include class title, number, time, and team number in addition to each individual’s name. Any missing information will result in the reduction of your grade.

PERFORMANCE EVALUATION:

I will base my grading for the course on the following criteria:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tr>
<td>Class Participation and Current Event Presentation (Individual)</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 Case Analyses (Individual)</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<td>Group-led Discussion (Team)</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Examination (Individual)</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Investigative Report (Team)</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
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TENTATIVE SCHEDULE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

Week One - 8/14/2006: The Role of IT in Corporations

1. IT doesn’t matter, Nicholas G. Carr, Harvard Business Review, May 2003, 41-49
3. The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-first Century, Thomas L. Friedman, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, NY. 2005 (Scan the major headings if you have the book)

Week Two – 8/21/2006: Key Issues for CIOs and Board of Directors

CASE ONE: Pfizer’s Virtual CIO, Harvard Business Case

2. IT and the Board of Directors: Is there an IT attention Deficit? Huff, Maher & Munro, MIS Quarterly Executive, June 2006, 55-68 (G1)

DUE: One-page case analysis report based on one question from CASE ONE.


CASE TWO: American Airline Reservations Systems, MIS Quarterly

2. Deep Change: How operational innovation can transform your company, Michael Hammer, April 2004, 85-93 (G2.a)
3. Human Reengineering, R. Cooper and M. L. Markus, SMR, Summer 1995, 39-50 (G2.b)

DUE: One-page case analysis report based on one question from CASE TWO


CASE THREE: Cisco Systems Architecture: ERP and Web-enabled IT, Harvard Case

2. Project Retrospectives: Evaluating Project Success, Failure and Everything in Between, MISQ Executive, 4(3) September 2005. (G3)

DUE: One page proposal for topic and outline of your investigative report
DUE: One-page case analysis report based on one question from CASE THREE

CASE FOUR: Business Intelligence Software at SYSCO, Harvard Business Case

3. But what is the ‘Right Thing’?: Ethics and IS in the Corporate Domain, Smith, MIS Quarterly Executive, June 2004, 105-115

DUE: One-page case analysis report based on one question from CASE FOUR


CASE FIVE: Eastman Kodak’s Strategic Outsourcing, Harvard Business Case

2. Nomadic Culture: Cultural Support for Working Anytime, Anywhere, Chen & Nath, ISM, Fall 2005 (G)

DUE: One-page case analysis report based on one question from CASE FIVE

Week Seven – 9/25/2006: Investigative Report Presentation and Final Exam

DUE: Your investigative report, power point files (hard copy and e-file), no later than 5pm on Thursday, September 28, 2006

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

Academic integrity is a cornerstone of the intellectual life of a university. Consistent with University policy, violations of academic integrity will be considered a serious offense. Any student who is judged to have violated academic integrity, such as cheating and plagiarizing, will be subject to the penalties discussed in the Code on Campus Affairs. Please stay true to your own learning and writing.

TEAM WORK:

Most of the time, teamwork provides the best opportunity to bring in creativity and diverse viewpoints from group members. However, in some occasions, conflicts and resentment can occur in groups due to inequitable contributions, miscommunication and/or misunderstanding. You can consider using campus mediation services or group feedback and evaluation. When anonymous group feedback becomes necessary and is used, the result will reflect on your final grade.