

# Course Outline

<b>Course Code</b>	<b>RSM392H1</b>
<b>Course Name</b>	Strategic Management
<b>Term, Year</b>	Fall, 2023
<b>Course Meets</b>	L5101 Tues, 5-7pm WO
<b>Web page URL</b>	<a href="https://q.utoronto.ca/courses/314695">https://q.utoronto.ca/courses/314695</a>

## Instructor Details

<b>Name</b>	<b>Email</b>	<b>Phone</b>	<b>Office Hours</b>	<b>Virtual Office Link (backup)</b>
Shannon Liu	shannon.liu@rotman.utoronto.ca	416-978-5068 (office)	office hours by appointment	<a href="https://utoronto.zoom.us/j/9341403962">utoronto.zoom.us/j/9341403962</a>

### Teaching Assistants:

Abhinit Malhotra: [abhinit.malhotra@mail.utoronto.ca](mailto:abhinit.malhotra@mail.utoronto.ca)

## Course Scope, Mission and Learning Outcomes

Strategy, as taught in this course, is about why some businesses are able to consistently turn a profit, while others are not. We are looking to identify sources beyond “luck” that explain why firms with the same opportunities can nonetheless perform so differently.

Among other things, we will explore:

1. Why certain strategic choices fit together better than others
2. How industries shape firm performance
3. The strategies firms pursue to create and capture value
4. When firms should grow, shrink, or expand in scope
5. How firms pursue innovation
6. How firms motivate workers, managers, and suppliers

Throughout the semester you will read a combination of academic papers, practitioner articles, and case studies, exploring these themes and topics. Some of the case studies will explore firms you might not be familiar with or familiar firms at earlier times in their history. This is deliberate: we will use these cases to suss out generalizable lessons related to why some firms become highly profitable and others do not.

The ultimate goal of this course is to improve your decision-making and critical thinking capabilities through learning and applying strategy tools and through active discussion and debate with peers. The emphasis of the course, and particularly of class discussion, is on rigorous thinking and learning rather than finding the “right” answer.

We should also note that RSM 392 is designed to function like an MBA course and to prepare students (a) for potential MBA courses in the future and (b) for the intensity of the professional experience. Note that the course builds heavily on the MBA Strategy courses offered by leading

MBA programs. Consistent with this approach, we emphasize class participation, class discussion, and professionalism to a substantial degree

## Course Prerequisites

Completion of 9.0 credits; RSM219H1; RSM222H1

## Course Materials

### Required Readings/ Electronic Course Materials

This course will be using the following electronic course materials:

Digital coursepack from Ivey Publishing.

These materials will cost a total of \$52.65 CAD. The use of these materials complies with all University of Toronto policies which govern fees for course materials.

#### How to download the digital coursepack:

To purchase the course materials on Ivey Publishing's website:

1. Go to the [Ivey Publishing website](#)
2. Log in to your existing account or click "Register" to create a new account and follow the prompts to complete the registration. If registering, choose the "Student" role.
3. Click on this [link](#) or copy into your browser: <https://www.iveypublishing.ca/s/ivey-coursepack/a1R5c00000FvayMEAR>
4. Click "Add to Cart" or "Download". And/or see below for the last step if necessary.
5. Go to the Shopping Cart (located at the top of the page), click "Checkout", and complete the checkout process.

For assistance contact Ivey Publishing directly Monday to Thursday: 8:00am-4:30pm (EST)  
Friday: 8:00am-4:00pm (EST) at [cases@ivey.ca](mailto:cases@ivey.ca) or 519-661-3208

Please note: additional readings will be posted to Quercus.

## Evaluation and Grades

Grades are a measure of the knowledge and skills developed by a student within individual courses. Each student will receive a grade on the basis of how well they have command of the course materials, skills and learning objectives of the course.

Work	Percentage of grade	Due Date
Class Participation	15%	Ongoing
Quizzes	10%	Ongoing (see below)
Strategic Analysis Assignments	10%	Ongoing (see below)
Mid-Term Test	25%	Oct 24, 2023
Final Term Test	40%	During exam period (date to be determined)

## Course Format and Expectations

### *Class Participation (15%)*

The goal of class discussion is to arrive at a collective analysis of the issues presented by the day's materials. Strategic analysis is not accomplished through the routine application of formulas, but rather through reasoned analysis under conditions of limited information and uncertainty. One of the primary goals of this course is to help you develop the ability both to clarify your own position on a strategic question and to be able to articulate and defend it clearly. I hope to facilitate discussions and give everyone an equal opportunity to participate. Therefore, it is important that you come prepared for every class.

With a reading, you should be able to outline the problem that the article addresses, describe the core points of the reading, and most importantly, offer your analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the reading's central argument. With a case, you should be able to identify the key issues, problems, and opportunities facing the central protagonists, to articulate and evaluate alternative approaches to the problems, and to describe the course of action that you recommend and the reasons for your recommendations.

If you happen to have information from outside the case materials, please do NOT introduce it in the discussion without prior discussion with the instructor. The point of the case discussion is to adopt the perspective of the decision makers at the time of the case, and adding extra information shifts the discussion away from the issues we need to emphasize in the case. On the other hand, if you are particularly knowledgeable about a case, a firm or an industry we discuss, please let the instructor know so that your insights can be eventually brought to bear in the discussion.

It is my hope that our class can serve as a riskless environment in which we all feel comfortable testing new ideas and pushing the boundaries of our thinking. This may be a different experience than you have had in previous classes, but exploring your ideas out loud by participating in the discussion will serve you well in other classes and in your future careers. I know that some of you may be shy or uncomfortable speaking publicly, and/or that English is not your first language. If you are particularly worried about your in-class contributions, please check in within the first two weeks of the semester and I can work with you on creative ways to help your contributions. For example, I could coordinate with you on an in issue for you to raise in class or a question for you to answer. There is, however, no alternative to participating in class discussions. But if you do fall into this category, please come see me early in the term and we will work together to come up with ways to facilitate your participation. See the section on Preparing for Class for more specific details on what you should do to ensure you'll feel comfortable when discussion starts.

Class contribution will be graded using the following criteria:

- **Relevance:** Are you a good listener? Are your comments clearly related to the case and to the comments of others? Are your comments linked to the themes that the class is exploring together?
- **Advancement:** Do your comments move the class discussion forward or simply reiterate points that have already been made? Do you sustain a line of argument or point of view through a significant part of the class session, or is it an isolated comment?
- **Support:** Have you used specific data from the case, from the readings, or from your personal experiences to back up the assertions that you are making?
- **Integrative Thinking:** Is there a willingness to challenge the ideas that are being expressed? Is there a willingness to test new ideas? Does the participant integrate material from past classes or the readings where appropriate? Do the comments reflect cumulative learning over the course, or does the participant merely consider each case in isolation?
- **Clarity:** Are your comments succinct and understandable?

- Quantity: Do you participate on a regular basis?

These bullet points highlight two important parts of a good discussion: preparation (so that you can support your answers and make clear statements) and listening (so that you respond to the discussion as it unfolds). Positive contributions may include contributions such as: providing germane illustrations; motivating the use of a particular tool or technique; helpful recapitulation or summarizing; making observations that link or integrate concepts or discussion; responding effectively to questions; asking perceptive questions; illustrating specific points by appealing to your own experiences; quoting movies that neatly illustrate important elements of readings or cases; as well as presenting or supporting alternative, or unpopular, positions. Being “wrong” will not count against you, but it will also not help out. Making empty or repetitive comments that do not add to the discussion will also not help, and may hurt if these comments interfere with the ability to discuss issues in depth.

Students who dominate discussions, discourage, intimidate, or show a lack of respect for other participants, or diminish the value of the class in any way, will be penalized. In particular, you are expected to treat colleagues with respect: to disagree with an idea without discrediting the speaker; to helping others to articulate their points of view; and to use airtime judiciously. Please treat others as respected colleagues.

### **Quizzes (10%)**

I will post a short quiz weekly, from session 2 through session 12, excluding the week of the midterm. The quiz will contain no more than 4 multiple choice questions about the facts in the case. Quizzes will go live a week before the date of the session in which the case is to be discussed and are due before the class. If you read the case carefully, you should be able to answer these questions without difficulty.

### ***Strategic Analysis Assignments: One Pager (2.5% each, 10% total)***

You will complete four assignments in the form of a one-pager in this course. A one-pager is a one-slide summary of a case/business problem. It is often used in the workplace to explain the problem and potential solutions to senior management in a clear and concise manner. During this semester, you will be required to complete four one-pagers about either a case we have discussed in class or a new case. The purpose of these assignments is to incentivize you to think carefully about the strategic choices of the agents in the cases after learning the concepts, improve your analytical skills, and develop compelling arguments from both learning-by-doing and feedback. This exercise will also prepare you for when you are working since this is an essential skill you will utilize in your daily life. All one-pagers should be submitted to Quercus by the due date. See below for the penalty policy for missing the due date.

Support is available through the RC Centre for Professional Skills (CPS) for students who would like help or feedback on their writing or speaking (presentations). CPS offers both individual and group appointments with trained writing instructors and presentation coaches who are familiar with the RC program and common types of business assignments. You can also access your college Writing Centres for help with written assignments.

You can book an appointment with a writing or presentation coach through the RC Centre for Professional Skills Writing Centre. For more information about writing centres, student supports, and study resources, see the [Writing and Presentation Coaching academic support page](#).

### ***In-Class Midterm Exam (25%)***

An in-class midterm exam will take place during our usual class time on Tuesday, October 24. This will be an individual, <closed- or open->book exam. I will provide more details on the structure of the exam in advance of the midterm date.

### *Final Exam (40%)*

There will be an open-book 3-hour final exam on Quercus scheduled during the exam period. This exam will consist of multiple-choice, short-answer, and long-answer (i.e., paragraph) questions that span the entire semester's coursework. I will provide you with more information on the structure of the exam by the final day of class.

### *Missed Tests and Assignments (including mid-term and final-term assessments)*

Students who miss a test or assignment for reasons entirely beyond their control (e.g. illness) may request special consideration **within 2 business days** of the missed midterm/test/assignment due date.

In such cases, students must:

1. Complete the Request for Special Consideration form: <https://uoft.me/RSMConsideration>
2. Provide documentation to support the request, eg. Absence Declaration from [ACORN](#), medical note etc.

**Please note:** As of September 2023, students may use the Absence Declaration on ACORN **\*one time per term\*** to report an absence and request consideration. **Any subsequent absence will require a [Verification of Illness form](#) or other similar relevant documentation.**

Students who do not submit their requests and documentation within 2 days may receive a grade of 0 (zero) on the missed course deliverable.

Outside of these reasons, all tests and assignments are due on the date and at the time specified in Quercus. Students who do not provide this information will be given a grade of 0 (zero) for the missed course deliverable.

### *Late Assignments*

*All assignments are due on the date and at the time specified in Quercus.* Students who, for reasons beyond their control, are unable to submit an assignment by its deadline must obtain approval from the instructor for an extension. Supporting documentation will be required as per the policy on missed tests and assignments.

## Statement on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

The University of Toronto is committed to equity, human rights and respect for diversity. All members of the learning environment in this course should strive to create an atmosphere of mutual respect where all members of our community can express themselves, engage with each other, and respect one another's differences. U of T does not condone discrimination or harassment against any persons or communities.

## Commitment to Accessibility

The University is committed to inclusivity and accessibility, and strives to provide support for, and facilitate the accommodation of, individuals with disabilities so that all may share the same level of access to opportunities and activities offered at the University.

If you require accommodations for a temporary or ongoing disability or health concern, or have any accessibility concerns about the course, the classroom or course materials, please [email Accessibility Services](#) or [visit the Accessibility Services website for more information](#) as soon as possible. Obtaining your accommodation letter may take up to several weeks, so get in touch with them as soon as possible. If you have general questions or concerns about the accessibility of this course, you are encouraged to reach out to your instructor, course coordinator, or Accessibility Services.

## Ouriginal

Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to the University's plagiarism detection tool for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the tool's reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of this tool are described on the [University's Plagiarism Detection Tool FAQ](#) page from Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation.

## Generative AI / ChatGPT

Students are allowed restricted use of generative artificial intelligence tools or apps such as ChatGPT and other AI writing assistants for the completion of any course requirement. Students may use such tools to gather information from across sources and assimilate it for understanding. However, all final submitted deliverables must be original work produced by the individual student alone. Representing any AI-generated content as one's own idea may be considered an academic offense in this course. If you quote or paraphrase from a generative artificial intelligence application, you must indicate this through quotation marks and citation as you would to any published article.

Furthermore, the use of AI tools is strictly prohibited for all exams, including the open-book final exam. Use of generative AI for exams will be considered use of an unauthorized aid, which is a form of cheating.

## Academic Integrity

Academic Integrity is a fundamental value essential to the pursuit of learning and scholarship at the University of Toronto. Participating honestly, respectfully, responsibly, and fairly in this academic community ensures that the U of T degree that you earn will continue to be valued and respected as a true signifier of a student's individual work and academic achievement. As a result, the University treats cases of academic misconduct very seriously.

[The University of Toronto's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters](#) outlines the behaviours that constitute academic misconduct, the process for addressing academic offences and the penalties that may be imposed. You are expected to be familiar with the contents of this document. Potential offences include, but are not limited to:

In papers and assignments

- Using someone else's ideas or words without appropriate acknowledgement.
- Submitting your own work in more than one course without the permission of the instructor.
- Making up sources or facts.
- Obtaining or providing unauthorized assistance on any assignment (this includes collaborating with others on assignments that are supposed to be completed individually).

On test and exams

- Using or possessing any unauthorized aid, including a cell phone.
- Looking at someone else's answers.
- Misrepresenting your identity.
- Submitting an altered test for re-grading.

## Misrepresentation

- Falsifying institutional documents or grades.
- Falsifying or altering any documentation required by the University, including (but not limited to) medical notes.

All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated by the procedures outlined in the *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters*. If you have any question about what is or is not permitted in the course, please do not hesitate to contact the course instructor. If you have any questions about appropriate research and citation methods, you are expected to seek out additional information from the instructor or other U of T or RC resources such as the RC Centre for Professional Skills, the College Writing Centres or the Academic Success Centre.

## Email

At times, the course instructor may decide to communicate important course information by email. As such, all U of T students are required to have a valid UTmail+ email address. You are responsible for ensuring that your UTmail+ email address is set up and properly entered on ACORN. For more information visit the [Information Commons Help Desk](#).

Forwarding your utoronto.ca email to a Gmail or other type of email account is not advisable. In some cases, messages from utoronto.ca addresses sent to Gmail accounts are filtered as junk mail, which means that important messages from your course instructor may end up in your spam or junk mail folder.

## Recording Lectures

Lectures and course materials prepared by the instructor are considered by the University to be an instructor's intellectual property covered by the Canadian Copyright Act. Students wishing to record a lecture or other course material in any way are required to ask the instructor's explicit permission, and may not do so unless permission is granted. Students who have been previously granted permission to record lectures as an accommodation for a disability are excepted. This includes tape recording, filming, photographing PowerPoint slides, Quercus materials, etc.

If permission for recording is granted by the instructor (or via Accessibility Services), it is intended for the individual student's own study purposes and does not include permission to "publish" them in any way. It is forbidden for a student to publish an instructor's notes to a website or sell them in any other form without formal permission.



	Date	Topic	Details	Reading
1	Sep 12	Introduction to Strategy	<p>What is strategy?</p> <p>Why, and to what extent, do firms differ in their productivity and profitability?</p> <p>Why aren't all profits competed away from successful firms?</p> <p>Why are business cases difficult to learn from without theory?</p>	
2	Sep 19	Industry Analysis and Value Capture (1)	<p>How much do industries differ in their profitability?</p> <p>Is it best to enter "blue ocean" industries where you are a monopolist?</p> <p>Are rival firms always competitors?</p> <p>Why do some firms in a value chain earn large profits and some earn little?</p>	<p>HBS Case on Crown, Cork and Seal</p> <p>"The Right Game" by Brandenberger and Nalebuff</p> <p><a href="#">"Why do Management Practices Differ Across Firms and Countries"</a> by Bloom and van Reenen. (Optional)</p>
3	Sep 26	Industry Analysis and Value Capture (2)	<p>What are vertical and horizontal differentiation?</p> <p>How can firms differentiate in their input markets?</p> <p>When is differentiating your product bad for profits?</p> <p>Should you always differentiate into higher-quality products?</p>	<p>HBS Case on Natura</p> <p><a href="#">"Taking Industry Structuring Seriously"</a> by Makadok and Ross (only pages 509-523; the appendix is very technical and can be omitted)</p>
4	Oct 3	Competitive Positioning (1)	<p>Why do we use prices in the first place?</p> <p>What other "mechanisms" can be used to transact, and when should they be used?</p> <p>When do prices get competed down to zero profitability?</p> <p>What causes price wars?</p>	<p>Kellogg writeup on "The Mother of All Pricing Battles"</p> <p>HBS Case on Virgin Mobile</p> <p><a href="#">"Principles of Pricing"</a> by Vohra and Krishnamurthi:</p> <p>Chapter 7: Pricing and Competition (Required)</p>



				Chapter 9: Appendix on Game Theory (Optional)
5	Oct 10	Competitive Positioning (2)	<p>When considering entry, does the age of an industry matter?</p> <p>Why do incumbents get entrenched in some industries?</p> <p>Why are new inventions adopted slowly?</p> <p>Why do some industries have frequent exit and entry of leading firms?</p>	<p>Ivey Case on Porter Airlines</p> <p><a href="#">"Industry Life Cycles"</a> by Klepper</p>
6	Oct 17	Corporate Strategy and Incentives (1)	<p>Why do firms exist anyway?</p> <p>Why did firms arise historically?</p> <p>What should you make yourself and what should you buy?</p> <p>When should firms merge or separate?</p>	<p>Notes on Theory of the Firm</p> <p>Harvard Case on Walt Disney Company</p>
7	Oct 24	Midterm	In-class Midterm	
			Class 8 through 12 will shift toward the internal organization of firms	
8	Oct 31	Corporate Strategy and Incentives (2)	<p>Why can't you make workers do what you want?</p> <p>Why are teams hard to motivate?</p> <p>What is performance pay trying to accomplish?</p> <p>When can strong incentives perversely make outcomes worse?</p>	<p>HBS Case on Lincoln Electric</p> <p><a href="#">"On the Folly of Rewarding A While Hoping for B"</a> by Kerr</p> <p><a href="#">"Excellent Police"</a> by Fisman and Sullivan (Optional)</p>
9	Nov 14	Relational Contracts	<p>Why are formal contracts so rare in business contexts?</p> <p>When can the promise of future business or promotions induce cooperation today?</p> <p>Why did General Motors decline in the 1980s instead of just copying Toyota's practices?</p>	<p><a href="#">"Management Practices, Relational Contracts, and the Decline of General Motors"</a> by Helper and Henderson</p> <p>Optional reading for more technical detail:</p>

				<p><a href="#">“Non-contractual Relations in Business: A Preliminary Study”</a> by Macaulay</p> <p><a href="#">“What do Managers Do?”</a> by Gibbons and Henderson Click on Download PDF Chapter → then Click on Part IV Within Forms: Structures and Processes → then Click on Show Subsections → then click on 17. What Managers Do?</p>
10	Nov 21	Innovation Strategy (1)	<p>Why do bigger or more experienced firms have lower unit costs?</p> <p>When are decreasing unit costs a source of strategic advantage?</p> <p>How do you know, empirically, the nature of the learning curve in your industry?</p> <p>What are the dangers of taking advantage of learning curves?</p>	<p>HBS Case on Airborne Express</p> <p>Optional reading for more technical detail:</p> <p><a href="#">“Learning by Doing: The Real Connection between Innovation, Wages and Wealth”</a> by J. Bessen</p> <p>Chapter2 "Skills of the Unskilled" Chapter 3 “Revolutions in Slow Motion”</p>
11	Nov 28	Innovation Strategy (2)	<p>Is “disruption” overrated?</p> <p>What makes an entrepreneurial firm different anyway?</p> <p>Who becomes entrepreneurs?</p> <p>Is the “MVP” model of entrepreneurship always best?</p>	<p>NTU Case on Meituan-Dianping</p> <p>Optional reading for more technical detail:</p> <p><a href="#">“Dynamic Commercialization Strategies”</a> by Marx, Gans and Hsu (pages 1-24; appendix can be omitted)</p> <p><a href="#">“More Entrepreneurs is Bad Public Policy”</a> by Shane</p>

12	Dec 5	Couse Recap &Conclusion	<p>What do scientists in a firm actually do?</p> <p>Why may scientists be useful even if they invent nothing?</p> <p>Why do the non-research assets of your firm affect what types of scientists you want?</p> <p>How important is formal intellectual property?</p>	<p>HBS Case on GSK's Acquisition of Sirtris</p> <p>Optional reading for more technical detail:</p> <p><a href="#">"Absorptive Capacity"</a> by Cohen and Levinthal</p>
Exam Period TBD (Dec 9 to Dec 20)				

**Please note that the last day you can drop this course without academic penalty is Nov 6, 2023.**

## Other Useful Links

- [Become a volunteer note taker](#)
- [Accessibility Services Note Taking Support](#)
- [Credit / No-Credit in RSM courses](#)
- [Rotman Commerce Academic Support](#)

## URL links for print

- Request for Special Consideration Form: <https://rotmancommerce.utoronto.ca/current-students/forms-requests-and-appeals/forms/>
- ACORN: <http://www.acorn.utoronto.ca/>
- Email Accessibility Services: [accessibility.services@utoronto.ca](mailto:accessibility.services@utoronto.ca)
- Accessibility Services website: <http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/as>
- University's Plagiarism Detection Tool FAQ: <https://uoft.me/pdt-faq>
- The University of Toronto's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters: <http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>
- Information Commons Help Desk: <http://help.ic.utoronto.ca/category/3/utmail.html>
- Become a volunteer note taker: <https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/program/volunteer-note-taking/>
- Accessibility Services Note Taking Support: <https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/service/note-taking-support/>
- Credit / No-Credit in RSM courses: <https://rotmancommerce.utoronto.ca/current-students/degree-requirements/credit-no-credit-option/>
- Rotman Commerce Academic Support: <https://rotmancommerce.utoronto.ca/current-students/academic-support/>
- Book an appointment with a writing or presentation coach: <http://uoft.me/writingcentres>
- Writing and Presentation Coaching academic support page: <https://rotmancommerce.utoronto.ca/current-students/academic-support/writing-and-presentation-coaching/>
- Centre for Professional Skills Teamwork Resources page: <https://rotmancommerce.utoronto.ca/teamwork-resources>
- Book an appointment with a Teamwork Mentor: <http://uoft.me/writingcentres>