**Understanding Business Organizations: A Case Studies Approach**

Students will be introduced to business concepts through an interactive case study with an experiential learning component in which business strategies, challenges and opportunities are examined through the lens of different business organizations. Specifically, students will learn concepts related to Management, Economics, Finance and Marketing and will reflect on those concepts through readings from real-life businesses such as Google, Uber and Air B&B.

As a culminating course project, students will be randomly assigned to one of 4 organizational role groups: CEO, CFO, COO and CMO. Students will select a business entity (either of their own choosing or from a suggested list) and present business strategies, identify challenges, and share opportunities from the perspective of their assigned role group.

**Course Learning Outcomes**

Through this course, students will:

1. Understand the Liberal Arts tradition of WCU and the goals of the General Education curriculum
2. Understand the requirements and the rationale of studying Business
3. Develop an understanding of the nature of business and core business concepts
4. Discuss management, marketing, economic and financial strategies of modern corporate business
5. Critically identify and analyze challenges in today’s business through experiential learning opportunities
6. Develop an understanding of ethical business behavior
7. Develop skills to work in teams, discuss, organize and present business information effectively
8. Understand social, behavioral, cognitive and non-cognitive factors contributing to a successful college experience

**Course Outline**

*(The numbers in brackets refer to sample readings on page 4.)*

**Week 1:** The Liberal Arts Tradition & Campus Life at WCU

**Week 2**: The Structure of the General Education Curriculum

**Week 3:** Introduction of Case Study Model for the Course & Random Assignment of Groups

**Management:** Overview of Management Concepts of Organizational Theory; Leadership Strategies; Human Resource Management, Ethical Decision Making

***Sample Cases:*** *Leadership at Google [6], Business Strategies of Uber, Airbnb and Etsy [9]*

**Week 4: Legal Environment of Business:** Introduction to Regulatory Environment of Business

***Sample Cases:*** *Uber and Use of Independent Contractors [3]****,*** *Gender Wage Gap and the Case of Google [13, 14], Diversity in the workplace [12], Sexual harassment/discrimination- Cases of Wet Seal, Fox, Uber & Mizzou [15, 16]*

**Week 5:** Using the e-portfolio and its use across the undergraduate degrees at WCU

**Week 6: Economics and Finance:** Market Power, Competition, Employment, Sharing Economy, Basics of Corporate Finance and Investment

***Sample Cases:*** *Airbnb and the Sharing Economy Success [1], (Minimum) Pay Issues at Uber [4], Amazon & Walmart’s Market Power [11], Instagram’s Success over Snapchat [7], The only social media stock that matters-Facebook [5]*

**Week 7: Marketing and Accounting:** Marketing Concepts, Strategies and Research, Financial/Managerial Accounting

***Sample Cases:*** *Marketing to Millennials [8], Lessons to Learn from Instagram [2]*

**Week 8:** Social, Behavioral and Cognitive Factors and the Learning Process

**Week 9:** Non-Cognitive Factors and the Learning Process

**Week 10:** The Business Curriculum and Life after WCU for Business Students

**Week 11-12:** Experiential LearningPresentations

**Week 13:** Strengths-Based Learning and Strengths-Based Alignment of Professional Goals

**Week 14:** Overview of Factors for a Successful College Experience

**Week 15:** Developing a 4-Year Personal Plan for Academic Success

**Assignments**

**Breakout Sessions and Papers**

Students will be randomly assigned to groups on week 3. Groups will discuss a case provided by the instructor at the end of each Business-content week, namely, weeks 3-4 and 6-7, in the classroom. However, discussions outside the classroom will be encouraged as well.

Students will identify issues/challenges and propose action plans. Students will also write a two-page summary of their group discussion individually. The papers will include:

* 3-5 bullet points to summarize the main ideas
* 3-5 paragraphs to describe the issues, apply business analysis frameworks presented by the instructor and describe potential business strategies

**Case Study Group Presentations**

Each student group will be assigned to one of four organizational roles for the Case Study presentations: Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Chief Financial Officer (CFO), Chief Operations Officer (COO) and Chief Marketing Officer (CMO). Groups will select a business entity (either of their own choosing or from a suggested list) and present business strategies, identify challenges, and share opportunities from the perspective of their assigned role group.

Groups will prepare PowerPoint presentations to answer the following questions:

* What are your products and services? What is the significance of your company for today’s economy? Give us an overview.
* What is your role within the company?
* What are your current business strategies (management, economic, financial, marketing- choose based on your role)? Strengths? Provide examples of situations where these strategies led you to success.
* What are the main challenges facing your group? Carefully identify and explain 2-3 challenges/weaknesses.
* How do you plan to tackle these challenges as the CEO, CFO, COO or CMO of the company? Use the frameworks and examples provided to you throughout the semester. Explain your action plans, new strategies to explore and expectations as a result.

The presentations will be delivered on Weeks 11-12. Groups will have an hour to present their work, and all group members will be expected to participate in the preparation and the presentation of their Case Study. Students assigned to other groups are expected to actively participate in a question and answer period following each presentation.

**Sample Readings**

[1][*Among private tech firms Airbnb has pursued a distinct strategy*](https://www.economist.com/news/business/21722653-its-culture-cohesive-and-its-finances-disciplined-among-private-tech-firms-airbnb-has) *(2017) The Economist*

[2] Demers, J. (2015) [*10 Instagram Strategies That Every Brand Needs To Know*](https://www.forbes.com/sites/jaysondemers/2015/12/11/10-instagram-marketing-strategies-every-brand-needs-to-know/#61f9dd2f3d3b) *Forbes*

[3] Frazier, R. B. (2016) [*Sharing is Caring: Are Uber, Lyft Drivers Independent Contractors?*](http://www.hrhero.com/hl/articles/2016/10/14/sharing-is-caring-are-uber-lyft-drivers-independent-contractors-2/) *HR Hero*

[4] Kunkle, F. (2017) [*Uber Drivers Earn about $15.68 an hour but disparities are significant, survey finds*](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/tripping/wp/2017/01/26/uber-drivers-earn-about-15-68-an-hour-but-disparities-are-significant-survey-finds/?utm_term=.54e7e8c7d76e) *Washington Post*

[5] Martin,V. (2017)[*Facebook is the only social media stock that matters*](https://finance.yahoo.com/news/facebook-inc-fb-only-social-165723876.html) *Yahoo Finance*

[6] Nussbaum, B. (2011)[*Google’s Greatest Innovation May Be Its Management Practice*](https://www.fastcompany.com/1720052/googles-greatest-innovation-may-be-its-management-practice) *Fast Company*

[7] Shen, L. (2016) [*Snap Stock Instagram Stories*](http://fortune.com/2017/06/20/snap-stock-instagram-stories/) *Fortune*

[8] Spenner, P. (2014) [*Inside the Millennial Mind: The Do’s and Don’ts of Marketing to this Powerful Generation*](https://www.forbes.com/sites/patrickspenner/2014/04/16/inside-the-millennial-mind-the-dos-donts-of-marketing-to-this-powerful-generation-3/#2e7ae9de2c87) *Forbes*

[9] **Teixeira, T. S. & Blanding**, M. (2016) [*How Uber, Airbnb and Etsy Turned 1,000 Customers into 1 Million*](https://www.forbes.com/sites/hbsworkingknowledge/2016/11/16/how-uber-airbnb-and-etsy-turned-one-thousand-customers-into-one-million/#f2500c95da90) *Forbes*

[10][*The Sharing Economy, Boom and Backlash*](https://www.economist.com/news/business/21601254-consumers-and-investors-are-delighted-startups-offering-spare-rooms-or-rides-across-town) *(2014) The Economist*

[11] *Thomas, L. (2017)* [*As Amazon and Walmart consolidate small retailers are being left in the dark*](http://www.cnbc.com/2017/07/24/as-amazon-and-wal-mart-consolidate-small-retailers-are-being-left-in-the-dust.html) *CNBC*

[12] Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Excerpts), The Fair Labor Standards Act (Excerpts), The Americans with Disabilities Act (Excerpts)

[13] U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (2011) [*The Gender Wage Gap and the EEOC*](https://www.eeoc.gov/eeoc/newsroom/release/4-28-11a.cfm) *Press Release*

[14] Wickerham, J. (2017) [*Department of Labor accuses Google of ‘extreme’ pay discrimination against women*](http://nytlive.nytimes.com/womenintheworld/2017/04/11/department-of-labor-accuses-google-of-extreme-pay-discrimination-against-women/)*. NY Times*

[15] Wilkie, D. (2017) [*When HR Gets It Wrong: At Fox, Uber & Mizzou, Where Was Human Resources?*](https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/employee-relations/pages/hr-gets-it-wrong-1.aspx) *Society for Human and Resource Management*

[16] [*YouTube Clip of Wet Seal Retail Clothing Store Race Discrimination Case*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5b2MBilv7Po)