



COURSE INFORMATION

Course Number:	MGT 857
Course Title:	Digital Strategy
Term and Year:	Fall-1 2024
Class Meeting Time, Day:	Section 01: Tue / Thu 1:00 pm - 2:20 pm, Evans 4210 Section 02: Tue / Thu 2:40 pm - 4:00 pm, Evans 4210 Section G1 (MMS GBS): Tue / Thu 4:10 pm - 5:30 pm, Evans 4210

CONTACT INFORMATION

Professor:	TA(s):
Vineet Kumar	Richard Archer (richard.archer@yale.edu)
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Office Hours: By Appointment	

COURSE MATERIALS

- **Textbook(s):** None required
- **Recommended Books:** Instructor will provide required book chapters via Canvas.
- **Readings:** *See Detailed Outline of Class Sessions.*
- **Software:** *Excel may be used for assignments and project as needed.*

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

Disclaimer: Syllabus is tentative. Please check latest version on Canvas by “Last Updated” date.

Course Description:

Digital Strategy is a course that builds upon topics in strategy, marketing and economics to understand markets where digital technology plays an important role. Through a mix of quantitative and qualitative case studies and lectures, the course brings together a variety of issues unique to markets significantly impacted by technologies. The course is divided into 4 modules. Each module will feature a lecture session laying out the conceptual foundations followed by 2-3 case studies.

We study the essential elements of **business models**, the principles of hypothesis-driven choices. We will apply the ideas of strategy and tactics modeling to the analysis of problems of business structuring, functional organization and evaluate performance under existing and new digital

technologies. As appropriate, we will understand how digital models using data-based strategies change the dynamics of business performance.

We investigate reasons that we observe a variety of business models in the market for digital products and services, and identify outcomes to assess the performance of business models and the challenges in implementing them. Second, we focus on understanding strategies and how business models can be used by **disruptors and complementors**, with a view to evaluating drivers of success in the marketplace. Third, we study **platforms** to understand the primary issues in developing multi-sided platforms as well as the perspective of participants on each side. Fourth, we examine **technology-driven transformation** both from a technology perspective (with AI and blockchain as key emerging technologies), as well as from a firm perspective (with *The New York Times*).

Course Objectives:

The course is designed to provide a strategic perspective on digital technologies, but given the broad scope of the topic, aiming for comprehensive coverage in a few sessions does not seem feasible. I've had to make tradeoffs in selecting areas to examine in depth. My expectation is that a student who completes the course successfully should be able to:

- Understand growth and monetization tradeoffs in adopting business models
- Determine whether a disruptor or complementor strategy is more appropriate
- Evaluate design and governance decisions for platforms
- Develop a perspective regarding new emerging technologies and how they could reshape markets and firms
- Understand challenges and opportunities involved in undertaking a digital transformation

Note 1: This is NOT a digital marketing course, and will not focus on social media or digital marketing or advertising, Search Engine Optimization, Google / Facebook Analytics etc.

Note 2: This course is not suitable for auditing.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Course Component	Details	Points
Assignments (Individual and Group)	See details below	50
Attendance and Class Participation (Individual)	Every class	25
Project Report (Group)	See details below	25

Please see the Yale SOM Grading Policy at <http://portal.som.yale.edu/page/grading-policy>

Attendance: Students will be expected to regularly attend the section that they are officially enrolled for. You can write to the TAs for an exception for a class session switch, but note that this will only be permitted in exceptional cases (not on a regular basis).

Class Participation: You will be encouraged, and likely cold-called to share your views in class. Evaluation will be on the quality and to a lesser degree, the number of comments you make. Please come prepared to each class by reading the assigned material and thinking carefully about the preparation questions.

DESCRIPTIONS OF ASSIGNMENTS/PROJECTS/PROBLEM SETS

You will be required to form a group of **N** people within your section for the group assignment and project. *Groups need to be within section since we have a group presentation.* If you need help forming a group, the TAs will help. (Note: N might depend on the section and will be announced in class or via canvas).

Project: After forming a group, submit a one-slide with project proposal idea on canvas. Then, you'll set up a meeting with the professor to go over the idea and obtain feedback and approval. We will send out links to help schedule meeting times during predefined blocks. Assignment groups CAN overlap with project groups, in fact that's probably less complicated for everyone to manage.

NOTE: Project ideas must be submitted via Canvas for pre-approval by Sep 13, 2024. There will be an assignment with 0 points created for this purpose.

While I have in mind specific types of projects detailed below, I'm open to custom projects if you send me a carefully thought out one-paragraph written proposal if you want to do something different. **However, note that the same or similar project(s) cannot be submitted or presented in multiple courses.** The types of projects I have in mind are detailed below:

A) Developing a new business proposal based on “emerging” digital technologies (We'll define this as “something not in widespread use in the current (US) marketplace, but has a reasonable chance of becoming widely adopted in a few years”). Please check with the instructor if you have questions. The focus here will be on identifying how the technology can create value, and how the value can be taken to market.

B) Examine the transformative impact of “emerging” digital technologies on the business of an incumbent provider, taking the perspective of both the disruptor and complementor.

C) The product and company you evaluate will originate from TechCrunch's Startup Battle Field Leaderboard (<https://techcrunch.com/startup-battlefield/leaderboard/>). Choose a company that participated recently, i.e. in the last 3-4 years, using the “*Alumni from*” field to help with your selection. Your overall focus will be to understand how the product creates value, and present its business model analysis in depth, including alignment (synergy). You will also consider counterfactual analysis for choices made by the firm, and argue whether those might have been better for the firm.

Final project deliverable and evaluation: You should deliver a slide deck report with a 12-slide maximum limit. The slides must be self-contained without requiring anyone to go through the presenter notes etc. Projects will be evaluated on the following aspects: (a) creativity, (b) clarity of thought and writing, (c) quality of argument and (d) insights obtained. Depth is valued more than breadth or comprehensive coverage. The instructor will discuss project details in class.

Assignments: Details of Assignments will be posted on Canvas. Except the Group presentation and Final Project, all assignments should be submitted as a **PDF** document. Due dates are listed in “Outline of Class Sessions” below. If you have any questions at all, please don’t hesitate to check with the professor or TAs. **Group assignments** can be done in groups of X students (announced in class), whereas **Individual assignments** must be submitted separately by each person. Please certify the contribution of each person for group assignments. Everyone in the group is expected to make a significant contribution to **each** assignment, so please budget time to discuss assignments. Groups must be within section, since we have a presentation. Late assignments will not be graded. *No extensions or exceptions to any due dates should be expected. We will discuss assignment answers in class typically on the due date.* We don’t have any makeup assignments for missed classes or assignments. However, if you have an extenuating circumstance, please contact **AASL**, and they will determine an appropriate course of action.

Group Presentation assignment: all members of groups should be present and prepared to present in class. If logistics require, groups will be sequenced to present in class based on topic and differential contributions relative to other groups. It is important to submit **slides** via Canvas, so we can load them up before class. Please double check the slides show up correctly on the classroom computer.

Individual assignments: Your individual assignment submissions must be 4 pages or fewer (excluding any exhibits), in 11 or 12-point text font and double-spaced text. Please convert everything to one PDF file before submission and submit through Canvas.

Naming convention: Please include the names of all group participants in the document, and name the file in the following format: **Section02Group04.pdf**. For individual assignments: **LastNameFirstName.pdf**

Policy on Use of Large Language Models (LLMs)

I would recommend using generative AI tools based on Large Language Models (LLMs) like ChatGPT to learn more about the underlying ideas and concepts. If you use these tools for your assignments, please acknowledge this and include a couple of sentences about your experience with each submission. Just to be clear, you will not be penalized for using these tools. However, we will consider originality in determining grades. Therefore, submitting ideas generated by LLMs may not necessarily result in full points being awarded.

Yale SOM Policies

Please see the Yale School of Management Bulletin at <https://bulletin.yale.edu/bulletins/som/rights-and-responsibilities-students> for Rights and Responsibilities of students and for the Yale SOM honor code.

Laptop/Device Policy

Usage NOT allowed without the express permission of the instructor.

OUTLINE OF CLASS SESSIONS (All Dates 2024)

	Date	Topic	Assignment Due (9 am)
Module 1: Digital Strategy and Business Models			
1	Aug 29 (Thu)	Course Introduction and Overview of Business Models	
2	Sept 3 (Tue)	Dropbox: It Just Works (CASE)	A1 (Individual)
Module 2: Disrupting and Complementing			
3	Sept 5 (Thu)	Entry in Existing Markets (Disruptors and Complementors)	
4	Sept 10 (Tue)	Apple Pay (CASE)	A2 (Individual)
5	Sept 12 (Thu)	Robinhood (CASE)	
6	Sept 17 (Tue)	Zillow and Redfin (Dual CASE Presentations)	A3 (Group Presentation; submit Slides on Canvas)
Module 3: Platform Thinking			
7	Sept 19 (Thu)	Platform Thinking	
8	Sept 24 (Tue)	American Well (CASE)	A4 (Individual)
9	Sept 26 (Thu)	Issues in Platform Design	
Module 4: Transformation through Technology			
10	Oct 1 (Tue)	Firm Transformation with Technology The New York Times Paywall (CASE)	A5 (Individual)
11	Oct 3 (Thu)	Blockchain (In-class Exercise)	
12	Oct X	Guest Lecture at lunchtime (11:40am-12:40pm)	
13	Oct 10 (Thu)	Emerging Technologies Overview and Course Summary	

Project Proposal (Group) 1-2 paragraphs due on **Sep 13**.

Project Report (Group) Slides due on **Oct 18**.

Note: *The content of some sessions may change.*