STRATEGY AND DESIGN
Vaughn Tan; Department of Management Science and Innovation

Tuesdays, 10am-1pm; UCL Bloomsbury campus, location to be arranged.
Term 1, 2014/15 (September 22 to December 12, 2014)

Enrolment is open to all doctoral students at UCL and London Business School. Others wishing to enrol—including UCL Masters students and students from other schools—should contact me before September 10, 2014: v.tan@ucl.ac.uk

A BRIEF SUMMARY

Strategy and design theory have much to offer each other but are mostly disconnected. This seminar aims to expose you to selected major perspectives in strategic theory and design theory where relevant to strategy and management. We will explore how both perspectives can be applied to practical management and empirical research issues. In the seminar's final weeks we will also discuss particular areas of practical and/or research interest where strategy and design intersect: urban and real estate development strategy/policy, product development strategy, choice of performance metrics, adaptability, and others to be jointly arranged.

The seminar is intended to provide a framework, a setting, and an opportunity for PhD students to articulate or advance theoretical or empirical research programmes that investigate issues of strategy and design. It is not intended to be an exhaustive review of either strategy or design theory.

REQUIREMENTS

Critical literature review: 60%. A sole-authored paper (4000 word limit), that critically reviews selected literature in strategy and design. 1-page written proposal due in Week 5 (10% of the grade); full paper due in Week 9 (90% of the grade).

Seminar participation: 25%. Attendance and participation in each week’s seminar discussion is mandatory, unless arranged in advance. Participation will necessarily involve careful reading of each week’s material.

Class presentation: 15%. An in-class solo/group presentation, dates and topics to be arranged. See further details below.
The class presentation will entail choosing 1-3 readings for the group on a topic relevant to the seminar and of interest to you, sending those readings to the group at least 10 days in advance, and then guiding discussion of those readings during your assigned session (we will figure out groups, dates, and topics for the class presentation in Week 1).

In the critical literature review, you should identify particular areas of previous research or theory and show where and how future research could contribute. Both the class presentation and the paper should advance your dissertation plans by prompting you to identify interesting gaps in existing research.

WHEN AND HOW TO SUBMIT WRITTEN WORK

Written work must be submitted via email as a PDF file by 5pm on Wednesday of the week in which the assignment is due. You are responsible for getting your work to me on time. If you know that a particular deadline will not work for you, please discuss the matter with me at least a week in advance.

LATE WORK POLICY

Up to 24h late: 20% of final assignment grade deducted.
24-72h late: 50% of final assignment grade deducted.
72-96h late: 80% of final assignment grade deducted.
More than 96h late: 100% of final assignment grade deducted.

PRELIMINARY SEMINAR SCHEDULE AND READINGS

Readings are organised into loose thematic clusters. Some will come from conventional strategic theory, others will be taken from theory and practice in a wide range of fields—computer science, artificial intelligence, art, craft, architecture, and urban planning. Note that the reading loads will start out fairly heavy so we can establish a common vocabulary; it will then taper a little bit to accommodate the particular interests of the group.

Week 1: Introduction and some classic statements. Fundamental premises in strategic theory and design theory. Participants choose class presentation dates and topics; we discuss what Week 9 will look like.

Week 2: Approaches. Approaches and general principles in strategy and design. Types of problems and their implications for solution. Class presentation.


Week 3: Fit and the environment. The fundamental premise of strategy and design as achieving fit between an internal state and external context. Generic analytic and process frameworks for understanding and achieving fit.


**Week 4: Form and structure.** Form and structure

Week 5: Capabilities, resources, and constraints. Internal resources, particularly learning capabilities, and their contribution to a dynamic conception of fit. Class presentation. 1-page written assignment proposal due.


Week 6: Objectives and values.

Lawrence Weschler. *Seeing is forgetting the name of the thing one sees*. University of California Press, 2009, pages 89-117, 216-236
Ezio Manzini. The garden of objects. 1992

Week 7: Uncertainty and complexity.

Spyros Makridakis. *Forecasting, planning and strategy for the 21st century*. Free Press, 1990, pages to be selected

**Week 8: Emergence.** Design as a process of identifying objectives. Class presentation.


**Week 9: Practical applications** Final written assignment due.

**Week 10: Open.** There might be snacks too.

**READINGS (PRELIMINARY LIST)**


[41] David J. Teece, Gary Pisano, and Amy Shuen. Dynamic capabilities and

2003.

[43] James D. Thompson. *Organizations in action: social science bases of

[44] Michael L Tushman and David A Nadler. Information processing as an
integrating concept in organizational design. *Academy of Management

the frontier of contingency theory of organizational and institutional designs.


[48] Birger Wernerfelt and Aneel Karnani. Competitive strategy under

[49] Lawrence Weschler. *Seeing is forgetting the name of the thing one sees.*

[50] Oliver E. Williamson. The economics of organization: The transaction cost

[51] Oliver E. Williamson. Comparative economic organization: The analysis of
discrete structural alternatives. *Administrative Science Quarterly*,


[53] Shaker A. Zahra and Gerard George. Absorptive capacity: A review,
reconceptualization, and extension. *Academy of Management Review*,