

Outlier

Introduction to Business

BUS 0015

3 Credits

Instructors

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Course Description

This course will provide students with an overview of business and its functional areas. These areas include economics, marketing, finance, management, accounting, operations, information technology, macroeconomics, and entrepreneurship. Alongside these functional areas, students will learn about business ethics, how it affects the other core topics, and what it means to be a socially responsible business. The course will culminate in a discussion of contemporary issues, the creation of a business plan, and a comprehensive exam. By taking this course, students will gain a broad understanding of business as a whole and learn to apply that knowledge as an employee within an organization, as an entrepreneur, or as a continuing student within discipline-specific business courses.

Course Learning Outcomes

- Identify and explain the function of “business” and the core business disciplines: accounting, finance, management, marketing, operations, and information systems.
- Define and apply key terminology used in business contexts to enhance one’s “business fluency.”
- Describe how organizations finance their operations by raising capital and leveraging the time value of money.
- Identify different management styles, incentive programs, and people skills essential to the organizational structure of a business.
- Explain how accounting, financial statements, and ratio analysis keep a business functioning smoothly and efficiently.
- Describe how operations, logistics, and supply chain management maintain quality control and efficiency within a business.
- Identify challenges and opportunities, including ethical considerations and the role of technology (e.g., Artificial Intelligence) in modern business contexts.
- Understand how to create an original business plan leveraging the core business disciplines to innovate within a business or to start your own.

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Course Materials

This is an online course. All course materials (including lecture videos, interactive textbook, and practice exercises) are provided by Outlier.org through its course website, business.ext.outlier.org. Additional tools will be made available, incorporated into, or linked to from Outlier.org.

Class Policies

1. **Attendance & Attention to Course Materials** – As an online course, attendance is asynchronous and is tracked by students viewing the required lectures, engaging with interactive online materials, and completing practice exercises. Each student will also have the option to spend as much time as needed learning and practicing with additional materials and practice questions; the level of their understanding will be demonstrated by their performance on a set of mastery assessments in the form of quizzes, exams, a business plan, and a cumulative final exam.
2. **Access to Online Course Platform** – All course materials will be accessed through the course website business.ext.outlier.org. Course progress, lectures, active learning, practice exercises, and quizzes will be tracked and saved once you log in. The Course Homepage allows students to view graded assignments and course progress.
3. **Assessment Completion & Late Work** – This course's assessments include quizzes, exams, a cumulative final exam, and a business plan. The exams and business plan must be completed by their due date within their scheduled windows (as indicated on Outlier.org). The business plan assignments are eligible to receive a 24-hour extension of the scheduled due date. Extensions can be requested by submitting a short request form directly on the Outlier.org site, available within 24 hours of the assessment deadline. Extensions for exams must be requested via your school's Outlier administrator. Without an approved extension, late work will not be accepted. Failure to complete an assessment by the indicated due date will result in a grade of 0 for that assessment.
4. **Quizzes** – Each chapter provides multiple opportunities to complete quizzes. Only the highest grade of any completed instance of that quiz will count towards the student's final grade. Students may not use any kind of notes, websites, books, or any other type of aid on course quizzes. Unlike other assessments, quizzes can be completed at any time once their corresponding chapter has been unlocked. Make sure to complete at least one quiz per chapter before the final exam.
5. **Exams** – Depending on if you are an in-classroom learner or a remote learner, you will experience exams differently. If you are unsure which type of learner are, ask your school's Outlier facilitator.
 - a. **For in-classroom learners:** In order to maintain high standards of academic integrity, exams are proctored by your school's Outlier facilitator in the classroom. Exams should only be taken in the classroom on the predetermined exam dates and must be completed in a single contiguous sitting, while proctored by your school's Outlier facilitator. Refer to the [Academic Integrity Policy](#) for more information.

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- b. **For remote learners:** In order to maintain high standards of academic integrity, we use online technology to proctor exams. Students will be asked to confirm their identity with a photo ID, and students will be required to grant access to their computer, including its webcam, screen, and microphone, for the duration of the exam. Each exam can be taken anytime during the exam open period but must be completed in a single contiguous sitting. Refer to the [Academic Integrity Policy](#) for more information.
6. **Exam Materials** – Students may not use any notes, websites, books, cell phones/tablets, or any other type of aid on course exams. [This article](#) includes a full list of exam requirements for both in-classroom and remote learners. Reach out to your school's Outlier facilitator if you are unsure which type of learner you are.
7. **Academic Integrity** – Students in this course will be expected to agree to and comply with the [Outlier.org Academic Integrity Policy](#). Any student suspected of violating this obligation for any reason during the semester will be required to participate in the procedural process as outlined in the [Outlier.org Academic Integrity Policy](#). Graded assessments such as quizzes, the business plan, or exams are to be completed independently and should contain students' own work.
8. **Content Questions & Requesting Assistance** – Your learning will happen within the Outlier course. Use the button in the bottom right corner to submit feedback or if you have a question(s) about any of the content in the lectures, active learning, or practice exercises. You can also reach a Support Specialist through the [Student Success request form](#) or by engaging in the academic discussion community. One of our subject matter experts will review your question and provide a response. You can expect a response within 2 to 3 hours during Outlier.org business hours.
9. **Course Participation** – You will join Outlier's academic discussion community and participate in weekly conversations with the course facilitators and your peers to earn the participation portion of your grade. Course participation could include responding to the discussion questions posed by facilitators, sharing an interesting article you read that pertains to the chapters you're working on, or asking a question of your fellow classmates to try to solve a difficult problem. You can also answer your peers' questions by starting a thread under their posts. Derogatory and sarcastic comments and jokes that marginalize anyone are fundamentally unacceptable, especially in the classroom. Offensive language—or language that could be construed as offensive—should be avoided (see the [Outlier.org Academic Integrity Policy](#)). Only participation points earned before the course closes will count toward your final grade.
10. **Administrative Drops** – Students who do not meaningfully participate by the eleventh week of the term will be administratively dropped from the course. Meaningful course participation includes regularly logging into the course, completing quizzes, engaging in the academic discussion community, and responding to Student Success outreach.
11. **Withdrawals** – If a student decides to exit from a course AFTER the drop deadline and BEFORE the withdrawal deadline, it is defined as a withdrawal. This is different from having dropped the course, as a

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grade of W will appear on your transcript. Withdrawals do not affect your GPA and do not count toward the number of credits attempted. Students will still have access to the lectures and active learning, but progress in the course will not be saved. Students who Withdraw are not eligible for a refund.

12. **Disability Accommodations** – Requests for reasonable disability accommodations must be made through your school's Outlier facilitator. Please include specifics regarding the accommodation you are seeking along with relevant documentation from your school, doctor, or healthcare provider. Outlier is committed to ensuring that learners with accessibility needs have equal opportunity to succeed in our courses and will work with your school's Outlier facilitator to provide reasonable accommodations.
13. **Religious observances** – Outlier will make a reasonable attempt to accommodate student needs in the case of serious incompatibility between a student's religious creed and a scheduled test or examination. Requests for accommodations must be requested via your school's Outlier facilitator during the first two weeks of an academic term.
14. **Transfer Credit** – University of Pittsburgh grades and credits earned in this course appear on an official University of Pittsburgh transcript, and the course credits are likely to be eligible for transfer to other colleges and universities. College credit is earned with a passing grade (59.5 or higher). Individual colleges and universities may have additional policies regarding grade requirements for transfer credits. Students are encouraged to contact potential colleges and universities in advance to ensure their credits would be accepted. If students decide to attend any University of Pittsburgh campus, the University of Pittsburgh grade earned in the course will count toward the student grade point average at the University, and the earned credits will count towards the overall credits required for graduation. At the University of Pittsburgh, the grade from this course supersedes any equivalent AP credit.

Grading Criteria

A student's grade in this course will be comprised of the following elements:

- 40% Chapter quizzes (10 quizzes, 4% each)
- 20% Exams (four exams, 5% each)
- 20% Final exam (cumulative, presented in two parts)
- 5% Participation in academic discussion community
- The Business Plan
 - 5% The Business Plan: Part I
 - 10% The Business Plan: Part II

At the end of each chapter, each student is required to complete a quiz designed to assess their mastery of the material covered in that chapter. Each student will be able to attempt five (5) versions of each chapter's quiz:

- Three (3) versions will be made available to the student at the end of each chapter

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- One (1) version will become available to the student when the exam covering the material of that chapter is presented
- One (1) version will become available to the student when the two-part, cumulative final is presented

Each student is required to attempt and complete at least one version of each chapter's quiz. Failing to do so will result in a grade of 0% for that chapter. If a student completes more than one quiz for a chapter, only the highest grade achieved will be counted for that chapter. As such, the student is encouraged to use these multiple quiz attempts as opportunities to identify areas that are in need of further practice. This diligent effort will allow the student to improve their understanding, mastery of the material, and grade in the course.

Discussion Sections

Students will participate in several written discussion forums throughout the course, which will ultimately result in the formation of a standard business plan. Comprehensive submission instructions for the discussion sections will be included on the Outlier.org course website. All discussion sections will be graded by evaluators holding at least a bachelor's degree in Business, or a similarly relevant concentration.

Grades

An official grade will appear on the University of Pittsburgh transcript for any student who continues their enrollment beyond the official drop date for the course. Outlier.org will publicize the official drop date for each semester.

Grading Scale

A: 92.5 -100%
A-: 89.5 – 92.49%
B+: 86.5-89.49%
B: 82.5 – 86.49%
B-: 79.5 – 82.49%
C+: 76.5 – 79.49%
C: 72.5 – 76.49%
C-: 69.5 – 72.49%
D: 59.5 – 69.49%
F: 0 – 59.49%

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Course Materials & Assessments

Chapter assignments and assessments subject to change and will be announced through Outlier.org as applicable within a reasonable time frame. Please note that the course is divided into three units. Deadlines for assignments and unit-end assessments are detailed below. Academic discussion community participation points accrue throughout the course duration until the scheduled course end date. Students should aim to keep up with weekly responses to prompts and comments on classmates' posts. Exams and the business plan are the only scheduled coursework. Quizzes may be completed at any time during the course duration once their corresponding chapter has been unlocked. All active learning, practice terms, and lectures are provided for students' learning and practice and are not time-sensitive or graded but should be completed within each week if possible. All other active learning, exercises, and lectures are provided for your learning and practice and are not time-sensitive or graded.

Week	Chapter	Sections	Assessments
Week 1 (9/18-9/20)	1: Introduction to Business	• What is Business? • How This Class Works • Supply and Demand	
Week 2 (9/23 - 9/27)		• The Profit Function • Economic Systems and Market Structures • Economics & The Big Picture	Chapter 1 Quiz
Week 3 (9/30 - 10/4)	2: Marketing	• Intro to Marketing • How Marketing Works (STP)	

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		How Marketing Works (4 Ps)	
Week 4 (10/7 - 10/11)		- The Marketing Funnel - Marketing & The Big Picture	Chapter 2 Quiz
Week 5 (10/14 - 10/18)	3: Finance	- How Finance Works - Financing Your Business	
Week 6 (10/21 - 10/25)		- Money, Money, Money - Growing Your Money - Finance & The Big Picture	Chapter 3 Quiz
Week 7 (10/28 - 11/1)	1 - 3	Exam 1 opens 10/28 Exam 1 closes 10/31	Exam 1, Retake Ch 1–3 Quizzes as needed
Week 8 (11/4 - 11/8)	4: Management	- How Management Works - The Manager as a Planner - The Manager as an Organizer - Organizational Structures	
Week 9 (11/11 - 11/15)		- Motivation, Rewards, and Incentives - Control and Evaluation in the Organization	Chapter 4 Quiz

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		Management & The Big Picture	
Week 10 (11/18 - 11/22)	5: Accounting	- How Accounting Works - The Accounting Equation	
Week 11 (11/25 - 11/29)	Thanksgiving Break		Discussion community participation point earning period 1 ends Monday, 11/25 at 11:59PM ET
Week 12 (12/2 - 12/6)	5: Accounting (cont.)	- Debits, Credits, and Double-Entry Bookkeeping - Financial Statements	
Week 13 (12/9 - 12/13)		- Ratio Analysis - Accounting & The Big Picture	Chapter 5 Quiz
Week 14 (12/16-12/20)	4 - 5	Exam 2 opens 12/16 Exam 2 closes 12/19	Exam 2, Retake Ch 4–5 Quizzes as needed
Week 15 (12/23-12/27)	Winter Break		
Week 16 (12/30 - 1/3)			
Week 17 (1/6 - 1/10)		Draft Business Plan Part I Business Plan Part I Due Submissions Close 1/13 at 12pm (noon) ET	Business Plan Part I

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Week 18 (1/13 - 1/17)	6: Operations & Logistics	- How Operations and Logistics Work - Production	
Week 19 (1/20 - 1/24)		- Localization - Facility Design - Resource Planning	
Week 20 (1/27-1/31)		- Routing and Scheduling - Quality Management - Operations, Logistics, & The Big Picture	Chapter 6 Quiz
Week 21 (2/3 - 2/7)	7: Information Technology	- How Information Technology Works - Types of Information Systems - Knowledge Management	Discussion community participation point earning period 2 ends Monday, 2/3 at 11:59PM ET
Week 22 (2/10 - 2/14)		- Data Security and Privacy - Automation, AI, and Machine Learning - Information Technology & The Big Picture	Chapter 7 Quiz
Week 23 (2/17 - 2/21)	February Break		
Week 24 (2/24 - 2/28)	6-7	Exam 3 opens 2/24 Exam 3 closes 2/27	Exam 3, Retake Ch 6–7 Quizzes as needed
Week 25 (3/3 - 3/7)	8: Ethics	- How Ethics Work - Shareholder vs Stakeholder Value	

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Week 26 (3/10 - 3/14)		• The Triple Bottom Line • Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion	
Week 27 (3/17 - 3/21)		• Environmental Concerns • Short-Term vs Long-Term Benefits • Ethics & The Big Picture	Chapter 8 Quiz
Week 28 (3/24 - 3/28)	9: Going Macro	• How Macroeconomics Works • Monetary Policy • Fiscal Policy	
Week 29 (3/31 - 4/4)		• Economic Systems and Modern Issues • Macroeconomics & The Big Picture	Chapter 9 Quiz
Week 30 (4/7 - 4/11)	8 - 9	Exam 4 opens 4/7 Exam 4 closes 4/10	Exam 4, Retake Ch 8–9 Quizzes as needed
Week 31 (4/14 - 4/18)	<i>Spring Break</i>		Discussion community participation point earning period 3 ends Monday, 4/14 at 11:59PM ET
Week 32 (4/21 - 4/25)	10: How All the Pieces Fit Together	• Review the Puzzle Pieces	No Chapter 10 Quiz

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		• How the Puzzle Pieces Fit Together • Importance of Business Fluency	
Week 33 (4/28 - 5/2)	11: Making it Personal	• Resume Development • Interviewing & Interpersonal Skills • Personal Selling • Career Planning	
Week 34 (5/5 - 5/9)		• Personal Financial Planning • Time Management • Employer Expectations • Personal Growth & The Big Picture	No Chapter 11 Quiz
Week 35 (5/12 - 5/16)	12: Entrepreneurship	• How Entrepreneurship Works • Forms of Business Ownership • Types of Corporations • Design Thinking & Ideation	
Week 36 (5/19 - 5/23)		• Questions Entrepreneurs Should Ask • The Business Plan Template • The Entrepreneurial Spirit • Entrepreneurship & The Big Picture	Chapter 12 Quiz

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Week 37 (5/26 - 5/30)	13: Contemporary Issues	• Business as a Dynamic Force • Changing Workforce Demographics • Changing Global Energy Demands • Changing Access • Changing Technology	No Chapter 13 Quiz
Week 38 (6/2 - 6/6)	1 - 12	Cumulative final exam parts 1 and 2 open 6/2	Final Exams, Retake Chapter 1–12 Quizzes as Needed
Week 39 (6/9 - 6/13)		Cumulative final exam parts 1 and 2 close 6/12 Final Business Plan Submissions Close 6/16 at 12pm (noon) ET	Discussion community participation point earning period 4 ends on Monday, 6/16 at 12pm (noon) ET Business Plan Assignment

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