



APPLIES TO ACADEMIC YEAR 2014/2015

GRA 8212 SunZi Bingfa & Strategic Leadership

Programme

Executive MBA 2014/2015 - Maritime Offshore track

Responsible for the course

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Department

Department of Strategy and Logistics

Term

According to study plan

ECTS Credits

3

Language of instruction

English

Introduction

Sun Zi Bingfa (also known as Sun Zi's Art of War) is the most well-known Chinese military classic written more than 2000 years ago. Its value in influencing business warfare has never been disputed and it is must-read text in all major military academies of the world. Of equal significance is its relevance to strategic thinking, business and marketing strategies in the modern corporate boardroom.

With the increasing importance of China as an economic superpower (it is now the world's second largest economy and has the largest foreign exchange reserves), more and more multinational corporations are interested to understand the mindset of the Chinese strategist. For those who are familiar with the developments in China, it is worthwhile to note that many Chinese tertiary institutions and research institutes have begun to consciously conduct research on many ancient Chinese classics. Today, there are four major emerging schools of thought. They are the Confucian School (儒家 ru jia), typified by the works of Confucius (孔子 Kong Zi) and Mencius (孟子 Meng Zi); the Daoism School (道家 dao jia), typified by the works of Lao Zi (老子) and Zhuang Zi (庄子); the Legal School (法家 fa jia), typified by the works of Han Fei Zi (韩非子) and Guan Zi (管子) and the Military School (兵家 bing jia), typified by the works of Sun Zi (孙子), Huang Shi-gong (黄石公), Wu Zi (吴子) and Wei Liao Zi (尉缭子).

Conferences are regularly held in China and other places to discuss how these various ancient Chinese classics can be related to the world of business. Universities in China have also begun to use these Chinese classics as part of their business school curricula. Among the four major schools, the Military School has emerged as a hot favorite. Within the Military School, Sun Zi Bingfa has received the most attention. This is because it is a very profound piece of classic and philosophy. Indeed, it provides a very insightful way to understand the mind of the Chinese corporate and marketing strategist. After all, to the Chinese, the business world is like a battlefield.

There are several objectives in this course. First, it seeks to relate the Chinese military philosophy of Sun Zi to the applied world of business and marketing. Second, it seeks to relate the relevance of the past to the present and into the future. Third, it seeks to bridge the knowledge and cultural gaps between the east and the west. Fourth, it attempts to provide new and different insights on topics like strategic leadership, teamwork, business and marketing intelligence, strategy development and formulation, strategic controls, ethics, management of human resources, marketing strategies, and so on. Finally, it seeks to inspire participants to be more creative and adaptive in using Sun Zi Bingfa to the business world. Participants will learn that the philosophy of Sun Zi probably provides the foundation for quite a few of the modern strategic and business concepts and principles.

This course takes an oriental perspective in dealing with the various issues pertaining to strategy and marketing and seeks to broaden students' creative and analytical thinking skills (the major learning goals) in relating Chinese philosophical concepts to the realm of business. In particular, it seeks to challenge the students to think, act and behave out-of-the-box and to learn to integrate the best of eastern and western approaches to modern strategic thinking, strategic marketing and business practices. This is the second learning goal of the course – to be culturally sensitive and intelligent.

Learning outcome

At the end of this course, candidates are expected to achieve the following:

1. A good appreciation of the value of Sun Zi Bingfa and possibly, other Chinese classics, and how they can be applied in the modern world of strategic thinking, management and marketing practices.
2. How to bridge and integrate philosophical thoughts and knowledge of the past with the present, the ancient with the modern, and the east with the west.
3. For those with limited knowledge of the Chinese language, to develop an interest and appreciation of its subtlety and

nuances, and in the process, to have a better understanding of the Chinese language and culture.

4. To have a good appreciation of the legal and moral issues in applying military strategies in business and marketing.

5. Gain confidence in strategic thinking, strategic analysis and creative applications of Chinese philosophical thoughts into corporate and marketing strategies. This is the main learning outcome that every participant should aspire to achieve.

Prerequisites

Granted admission to the EMBA programme.

Compulsory reading

Books:

Chow-Hou Wee. 2003. "Sun Zi Art of War: An Illustrated Translation with Asian Perspectives and Insights. Prentice-Hall, Pearson Education Asia Pte Ltd. (Sun Zi)

Chow-Hou Wee. 2005. Sun Zi Bingfa: Selected Insights and Applications. Prentice-Hall, Pearson Education Asia Pte Ltd. (Sun Zi Bingfa)

Recommended reading

Course outline

- From Battlefields to Corporate Boardrooms: Relevance of Sun Zi Bingfa
- What It takes to Lead: Sun Zi's Insights and the Oriental Perspective
- "The Ill-Informed Walrus"
- Beyond SWOT Analysis: An Outside-In & Dynamic Approach to Understand Competition
- What Do You Do When You Are Doing Well: Lessons from Sun Zi Bingfa
- Mastering Relative Superiority: How Smaller Players Can Still Win
- "To Pass or Not to Pass the Ball" case
- Winning Through Team Unity and Effectiveness: The Military Perspective
- Key Success Drivers for Organizations: Insights from Sun Zi Bingfa
- Choose Battlegrounds Astutely: Avoid Landmines, Find Your Goldmines
- Strategic Trade-offs vs Yin-Yang Management
- The Art of Strategic Planning: The Underlying Thoughts of Sun Zi Bingfa

Computer-based tools

It's Learning

Learning process and workload

This course will be conducted via lectures, discussion and cases. Students are also required to do presentations. It is to be noted that as this is a course on a well-known Chinese classic, all the teaching materials will contain both English and Chinese languages, in particular, classical Chinese or wen yan wen (文言文). As such, students who can understand the Chinese language will probably be able to appreciate the course much better. However, students who do not understand the Chinese language will not be distinctively handicapped. The course will probably provide those who do not understand the Chinese language an added benefit – the ability to appreciate the complexity and nuances of the Chinese language and culture, and hence be able to develop a greater insight into understanding why Chinese (and their businessmen and corporate strategists) think, strategize and behave differently from, say, westerners.

The focus will be more on learning than instructing and teaching. The focus on learning is motivated by several factors. First, instructing and teaching are limited by time and space, while learning promotes a life-long pursuit that is limitless. Second, instructing and teaching rely heavily on the instructor who may have severe limitations in imparting knowledge. Learning leverages on the experiences of both participants and instructor. Third, teaching and instructing assume that the instructor is the more superior party which may not necessarily be the case. Learning puts everyone on par. Fourth, teaching and instructing assume that there could be one correct approach to problem-solving. Learning assumes that mistakes will be made, and that we get better as we go along. Finally, learning allows inculcation of the right attitude in acquiring knowledge from a self-motivating perspective. It is also a better approximation of the reality in the business world. It is important that candidates participate actively in this course.

1 ECTS credit corresponds to a workload of 26-30 hours.

Attendance to all sessions in the course is compulsory. If you have to miss part(s) of the course you must ask in advance for leave of absence. More than 20% absence in a course will require retaking the entire course. It's the student's own responsibility to obtain any information provided in class that is not included on the course homepage/ It's learning or other course materials

Examination

The course evaluation will be based on:

- Individual Class Participation 50%
- Group Essay/Assignment 50%

This is a course with continuous assessment (several exam elements) and one final exam code. Each exam element will be graded using points on a scale (e.g. 0-100). The elements will be weighted together according to the information in the course description in order to calculate the final letter grade for the course.

Specific information regarding student evaluation beyond the information given in the course description will be provided in class. This information may be relevant for requirements for term papers or other hand-ins, and/or where class participation can be one of several elements of the overall evaluation

Examination code(s)

GRA 82121 - Continuous assessment; accounts for 100 % to pass the program GRA 8212, 3 ECTS credits

The course is a part of a full Executive Master of Business Administration Program and all evaluations must be passed to obtain a certificate for the degree.

Examination support materials

Re-sit examination

Re-takes are only possible at the next time a course will be held. When course evaluation consists of class participation or continuous assessment, the whole course must be re-evaluated when a student wants to retake a exam. Retake examinations entail an extra examination fee.

Additional information