ECO 201 Paper

Due Date

* The final paper is due **Wednesday, May 1** (However, various parts of the paper should be completed during the term).
* Be sure to clear your topic with me.

Assignment: You are required to construct a case study/research paper during the course of the semester. The primary purpose of the paper is to:

* Apply microeconomic principles to analyze firms in the U.S.
* Offer strategic feedback for the firm based on your research.
* Give you an incentive to think critically about course information.

Goal: Construct a case study/research paper that examines a publicly-traded firm in the U.S. from a microeconomic standpoint and provide suggestions based on your findings.

* You will want to choose a firm for your focus. In addition to picking a firm that you find interesting, you will want to pick that provides data (or a firm that for which you can personally provide data). Publicly traded companies file reports with a great deal of data (preferred). However, if you have a strong preference to examine a privately held firm or small family business, please feel free to discuss the choice with me.
* You will complete an analysis of the following categories for the firm of your choice. We will discuss each of these in class, so you should complete the research for your firm after it is discussed in class so that we can discuss your findings. The following must be included in the body of the paper: **(NOTE: Be sure to break your paper into the following sections with headings)**:
  + Paper introduction – let the reader know the purpose of your paper!
  + What does your firm do? Introduce your firm and provide a brief history.
  + How have supply and demand conditions impacted the firm in recent years? Please be sure to include a visual that displays annual revenue for the past five years or so. See the risk section of the 10-K annual report for assistance.
  + Discuss pricing and price elasticity of demand for your firm. You will want to provide data to support your analysis. Is the demand for your firm’s products/services relatively elastic or inelastic? What does this suggest about their ability to change price and the impact of a price change on revenue?
  + Examine the costs of production for your firm. You should report the firm’s total costs for the past five years or so. You will want to consider the major variable and fixed costs for the firm. Also, be sure to discuss any major cost changes in recent years.
  + What is (are) your firm’s primary competitive advantage(s)?
  + What are the entry barriers for firms in this industry? Is it likely that your firm will face competition from new competitors going forward?
  + What is the market share for firms in the industry?
  + What market structure best describes the market conditions your firm faces? What does this mean for the firm in terms of their influence in the market? How does this impact their decision-making?
  + Given your research, what suggestions would you provide for the firm going forward? Please be sure to provide three specific recommendations for the company based on your research. Additionally, be sure to discuss additional information beyond the scope of this paper that you would want to know to assist you in making suggestions.
  + Conclusion

Paper Requirements:

* Length: I expect that each individual firm analysis will be 5-8 pages at a minimum; title page and reference page do not count toward the total.
* Title page including the name of your paper, your name, and a paper abstract (this is a brief summary of your paper; around 150 words).
* The paper should be double spaced with Calibri or Times New Roman font (size 12), 1 inch margins and justified text.
* You should cite all sources that you use for data and analysis.
* Resources should be cited on a reference page using APA format:
  + <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>
* Be sure to use proper spelling and grammar.
* Additional resources are available from scholarly journals (these can be found through the ECO database through FirstSearch on the library research page or JSTOR), scholarly books, government publications, or business news media (for example, the Wall Street Journal).
* The paper is worth 200 points (20% of your course grade).

We will utilize time in class to provide an opportunity to discuss specific details in the paper. While you don’t have to fully complete the components of the paper mentioned below by the check-in dates, you should start your research before the class check-in so that you can discuss your paper and ask questions. Dates are listed below with sections of the paper that you should consider:

* Friday, February 8: Introduction, Firm History, Supply and Demand
* Friday, March 22: Pricing & Price Elasticity, Cost
* Friday, April 19: Competitive Advantage, Entry Barriers, Market Share, & Market Structure (Also suggestions for the firm if you need assistance)

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| **Economics Writing Assessment Rubric** | | | | |
| **Category** | **Excellent** | **Achieved** | **Developing** | **Limited** |
| **Introduction**  **(20 points)** | The introduction emphasizes the importance of the paper, states the main topic, and clearly previews the structure of the paper. | The introduction states the main topic and previews the structure of the paper. | The introduction states the main topic, but does not adequately preview the structure of the paper. Main idea not clearly defined. | There is no clear introduction of the main topic or structure of the paper. |
| **Writing**  **(10 points)** | The paper uses proper sentence structure, grammar, spelling, and writing style. | The paper attempts proper sentence structure, grammar, spelling, and writing style, but contains several minor errors. | The paper attempts proper sentence structure, grammar, spelling, and writing style, but contains numerous minor errors. | The paper does not follow proper sentence structure, grammar, spelling, and writing style at all. |
| **Content**  **(120 points)** | The paper clearly makes a significant claim and effectively describes the findings and suggestions. | The paper presents a solid topic and adequately describes the findings and suggestions. | The paper topic is weak and/or underdeveloped. Description not necessarily clear or relevant. | The paper topic is unclear. There is limited use of any relevant supporting description. |
| **Suggestions & Conclusion**  **(30 points)** | The paper conclusion is strong, clear, and concise. The conclusion thoroughly summarizes the ideas in the paper and emphasizes the importance of the issue. | The paper conclusion is well organized. The conclusion summarizes some of the ideas in the paper and attempts to emphasize the importance of the topic. | The paper conclusion vaguely discusses the topic, but does not clearly summarize the ideas and importance of the paper. | There is no clear conclusion. Summary and emphasis of the importance of the topic are non-existent. |
| **References**  **(20 points)** | Effective and appropriate use of sources. Sources are properly cited in the text and documented in the reference page. | Adequate use of sources. Sources are properly cited in the text and documented in the reference page. | While sources are used, they are not always appropriate or relevant. More sources would be helpful. Sources are cited in the text and documented in the reference page. | No use of appropriate sources. Sources are not properly cited in the text or documented in the reference page. |

\* Note: Additionally, you must have each part completed on time to discuss in class in order to receive full credit.