BA 380: THE BBA SENIOR SEMINAR

BA 380 is an honors-type seminar that is open to a limited number of BBA seniors. Students in the seminar work in a collaborative environment with a senior professor to develop a thesis that builds on previous liberal arts and BBA course work. Through the exploration of ethical, historical, social and cultural aspects of current business issues, students have the opportunity to develop a well-rounded perspective that is valued in the global environment of business. The goals of the Senior Seminar are reinforced by the Boyer Commission report, which emphasizes the importance of an interdisciplinary undergraduate education that culminates in a research project during the senior year.

Senior Seminar Questions and Answers

1. What is the Senior Seminar format?

The seminar has three modules:

a. September-November: Development of a Research Proposal. This module includes sessions with visiting speakers. For example, senior corporate executives from different regions of the world are invited to share their experiences and to suggest research topics.

b. December-February: Individual Research. During this time, students meet regularly with the faculty director for Oxford/Cambridge-style tutorials.


Senior Seminar class meetings are scheduled in the afternoon after 4:00 pm or in the evening to avoid conflict with your other courses or with recruiting activities.

2. How many credits will I receive for the Senior Seminar?

You will receive six hours credit upon completion of the seminar, three hours in the Fall Term and three hours in the Winter Term.
3. What personal benefits might the Senior Seminar provide?
The seminar is designed to be the capstone learning experience of your undergraduate education. Through research presentations by other students, you will gain broad exposure to liberal arts and business school disciplines and their relationship to contemporary business issues. And your individual research will provide in-depth understanding of an issue or theme of special interest to you.

Special attention will be devoted to developing your analytical and communication skills. For example, students work in a cooperative manner in commenting on each other's drafts and presentations. The seminar will provide you with one last pre-graduation opportunity for candid evaluation of your written and oral communication skills by a professor and your peers.

The student who submits the best research paper will receive the Southwick Award and a prize of $500. (If co-winners are selected, the prize will be shared.) This award honors the memory of the late Professor Arthur F. Southwick, an outstanding teacher and researcher at the University of Michigan Business School.

Some academic organizations allow undergraduate students to present their research at national conferences and to publish their papers in conference proceedings. If your research is accepted for presentation, we will attempt to obtain funding to cover expenses associated with your participation in the national conference.

4. How are students graded?
To encourage a cooperative learning environment, you are not graded on a curve, as you are in BBA core courses.

5. Who will lead the Senior Seminar?
The faculty director is Professor George Siedel. Professor Siedel received a Thurnau Professorship from the University of Michigan for his contributions to undergraduate education. He has served as Visiting Professor at the Stanford and Harvard business schools and as a Visiting Fellow at Cambridge University. As a Fulbright Scholar, Professor Siedel has held a Distinguished Chair in the Humanities and Social Sciences.

6. How many students will be selected for the Senior Seminar?
Enrollment is limited to thirty students.
7. Who should apply? The Senior Seminar is most attractive to students who are:

- a. creative, intellectually curious, independent, entrepreneurially-oriented, and able to establish their own agenda,

- b. interested in working more closely than usual with a faculty member and a select group of BBA seniors, and

- c. interested in developing research and communication skills that may be useful in consulting, investment banking, marketing, and a variety of other careers.

8. How should I select a research topic? Professor Siedel and other students will provide suggestions and feedback that should enable you to select a topic that relates to your interests. Some possibilities:

- a. An “enhanced major” approach, where you (1) select a topic from your major field of interest (such as information technology, consulting, investment banking, entrepreneurship, or marketing) and (2) explore ethical, historical, social, and/or cultural aspects of that topic. Example: a student with an interest in marketing analyzed the role of sports figures in advertising.

- b. A liberal arts emphasis, where you explore a contemporary business issue in light of your liberal arts studies. Example: a thesis comparing the use of technology in competitive intelligence to Sun Tzu’s classic, The Art of War.

- c. Exploration of an enduring business theme—such as leadership, change management, negotiation, diversity, crisis management, power, strategy or business ethics—in light of great works of literature, history, biography, or film.

9. How do I apply? Professor Siedel will send you application information in March of your Junior year.

10. How does the Senior Seminar relate to my future plans? The seminar provides evidence of academic distinction that may be useful when you apply for a job or to graduate school. As the Boyer Commission report notes, courses like the Senior Seminar are designed to provide (a) a bridge to graduate education and (b) experience in analysis and problem solving that is useful throughout your career.
If you have other questions, please contact Professor Siedel, 5211 Davidson Hall, telephone 764-1392, email gsiedel@umich.edu.

Comments About the Senior Seminar (from student evaluations of the course)

“A great learning experience, both in terms of having to write a thesis and getting to hear a wide variety of interesting topics.”

 “[The flexible format] enabled me to... work on my time management and organizational skills.... I really enjoyed writing my paper and it is a great thing to discuss during my interviews. Everyone's interest and enthusiasm rubbed off and raised my awareness of some very important issues. This is really what the business school environment should foster.”

“ A great experience. It really forced me to work independently on my own. Also, learning from others was probably the best part of this class. We really built strong friendships and relationships with others.”

“The entire format was great...The presentations were very informative and interesting. I learned more from my peers than I did from profs in other classes.”

“The class was great—the best one I took at UM.”

“A great way to finish my undergraduate years!”

“[The course] is very entrepreneurial and I feel that I can match and work up to my potential.”

“Best class at Michigan.”

“What a fulfilling experience; perfect end to college career.”

“Great class! I recommend it to all!”

“By far the best Business School class.”

“Amazing course!”

“By far the best class I have taken at the University of Michigan. It is refreshing to know that there’s a course as innovative and inspirational as this one at the Business School.”

“The time spent together and working with one another was great.”

“I strongly recommend the course for those with an appetite for intellectual entrepreneurship and self-building.”

“This class (and writing the thesis) was the most rewarding time of my life.”