

# Teaching an Online MBA Course: “Business in a Global Economy- The BRICS Nations”

*Hema A. Krishnan krishnan@xavier.edu*

*Mee-Shew Cheung cheungm@xavier.edu*

## ABSTRACT

In this study, the authors propose a road map for effectively teaching an MBA level course, titled, “Business in a Global Economy- The BRICS nations” in an online format. The authors designed this course in 2013 and have delivered it in all formats including traditional-face to face, hybrid, and since 2017, in the online format. With the growing global popularity of online MBA education (Ramlall & Ramlall, 2018; Sun & Ganesh, 2014)), it is important for instructors to design and deliver courses which meet the expectations of the major constituencies such as the student, the instructor, the university, and the community. For the students, it is important that following the completion of the course, they develop a mastery of the key competencies as laid out in the course objectives, and which they can apply at their workplace. For the instructors it is important that they are able to deliver the course against the backdrop of the MBA learning objectives in an efficient and effective manner. It is also important for faculty to get the necessary institutional support to effectively teach the course (Ramlall & Ramlall, 2018). For the university, it is important that the course be an integral part of the MBA curriculum, a curriculum which is consistent with its mission. Finally, for the community, it is important that students are able to effectively engage society and be a change agent in areas which are critical in today’s global environment (Shapiro, Kirkman & Courtney, 2007).

The online MBA course, “Business in a Global Economy- The BRICS nations” is one such course that fulfills the expectations spelled out in the preceding paragraph. The main theme of the course is to create a foundation for doing business in four of the fastest growing markets of the 21<sup>st</sup> century: Brazil, India, China, and South Africa. These countries represent about 40% of the world's population, and offer tremendous opportunities for individuals and companies wishing to do business in these nations (Ghemavat, 2018). The course has been designed using theoretical principles as well as practical insight. As a result, the tools that the students learn in this course can be used to analyze other countries (Russia-the remaining BRICS nation, other developing and emerging nations, and developed nations) and to navigate the uncertainty that surrounds the global environment. Given the interdisciplinary nature of the course, and the broad description of the course theme, it lends itself to easy integration with the major MBA learning goals in the authors’ university. These MBA learning goals are: strategic thinking and leadership, global perspective and cultural diversity, ethics and corporate social responsibility,

critical thinking, effective written communication skills, and effective oral and interpersonal communication skills in an online format.

The course is 100% online and all modules are offered online. Except two sessions which are synchronous sessions for comprehensive team presentations, where the entire class meets online (remotely) at a scheduled time to participate in the presentations and the ensuing Q/A session, the remaining sessions are asynchronous.

The majority of the MBA student population at the authors' university is considered to be working professionals and the students are spread out across the major regions of the United States. The student body is diverse as evidenced from the undergraduate degrees they have earned, the companies they are employed with, and their functional area expertise. The students who enroll in this course have an average work experience of six years.

The study is a road map for other instructors who may be interested in designing and delivering a similar online course. A detailed description of the online course modules and objectives, sequencing of content areas and assignments, and course material, is provided in Table 1:

<b>Course: Business in a Global Economy: The BRICS Nations</b>	<b>All assignments should be submitted on Canvas by the due date; All times are Eastern Times</b>	<b>Note: Due dates are removed from this Table</b>
<b>Module 1 Online, Asynchronous</b>	<b>Module Objectives, Course Material, and Link to MBA objectives</b>	<b>Assignment, Grading</b>
Introduction to Global business The BRICS	Understand trends in global business environment. Understand how BRICs are different from U.S., EU, and other Asian markets. <b>Course Material:</b> Instructor's customized power-points. <b>MBA objectives:</b> global perspective, strategic thinking, ethics.	Instructor introduction Read the steps for preparing and posting a video introduction
<b>Module 2: Online, Asynchronous</b>		
China: Macro environment Analysis India: Macro environment Analysis Brazil: Macro environment Analysis	Understand and apply: Macro environment analysis for the China, India, Brazil markets. <b>Course Material:</b> Students will read/watch/listen to the material (customized power-point files, videos and instructor's audio and video summaries). <b>MBA objectives:</b> global perspective, communication, ethics.	<b>Discussion Board Question#1: Submit your video introduction, response posting; Worth 4% of grade</b> <b>Individual report #1 –compare, contrast China, India, Brazil. Worth 8% of grade</b>
<b>Module 3: Online, Asynchronous</b>		
India: Macro environment Analysis China: Macro environment Analysis Brazil: Macro environment Analysis	Submit a team presentation file on: a comprehensive industry analysis- applying the macro environment forces in India/ China/ Brazil (instructions on Canvas). Students will collect material for this presentation. <b>MBA objectives:</b> strategic thinking, critical thinking, global perspective, communication, ethics.	<b>Team Presentation#1 File submission Due on Canvas. Worth 10% of grade</b>
<b>Module 4: Online, Asynchronous</b>		
China, India, Brazil, South Africa- Macro Environment Analysis;  Summaries and Key Takeaways- Macro environment tool Competitor assessment tool	How to critically evaluate presentations. How to use the Macro environment tool for countries. <b>Course material:</b> Internal analysis articles, customized power-point files, presentation files of other teams. <b>MBA objectives:</b> strategic thinking, critical thinking, global perspective, communication, ethics	<b>Individual report #2- Review &amp; Critique of other teams' presentation files from the previous Module. Worth 15% of grade</b>

<b>Module 5; Online, Asynchronous</b>		
Internal environment analysis	Internal environment Analysis: Understand and apply SWOT, Value chain analysis, Business, Corporate Strategies. For China, India, Brazil, South Africa. <b>Course material:</b> Customized power-point files, videos, Ted Talk, and instructor's video summary. <b>MBA objectives:</b> strategic thinking, critical thinking, global perspective, communication, ethics	<a href="#">Discussion Board #2: First post and response post due on South Africa; Worth 4% of grade</a>
<b>Module 6: Online, Synchronous- Submit file before presentation</b>		
Online session Presentation #2: Synchronous Summaries and Key Takeaways- Internal environment analysis tool Value chain analysis tool	Company Analysis-Design, develop and present a comprehensive company analysis- applying Macro, Competitive and Internal environment tools to India or China or Brazil for a company assigned by instructor. Students will collect material for this presentation. <b>MBA objectives:</b> strategic thinking, critical thinking, global perspective, communication, ethics	<a href="#">Team presentations #2 files should be submitted on Canvas before presentation. Worth 20% of grade</a> Students should be logged in by 6:00 p.m. to participate in the team presentations and Q/A sessions.
<b>Module 7: Online; Asynchronous</b> Value-Chain analysis Sustainability Summaries and Key Takeaways- HRM tool and Sustainability (people, profits, planet) tool	Internal environment analysis: For China, India, Brazil Understand and apply Value chain function-HRM Understand and apply Sustainability concepts to China, Brazil, South Africa and India. <b>Course material:</b> Customized power-point files, videos, Ted Talk, and instructor's video summary. <b>MBA objectives:</b> strategic thinking, global perspective, communication, ethics	<a href="#">Discussion Board Question#3: First post and response post due on international cultures and HRM; Worth 4% of grade</a>
<b>Module 8; Online; Synchronous</b> <b>Submit file before presentation</b>		
Online session Presentation #3: File submission <b>Reminder: Final Reflection Paper Due last day of class; worth 15% of grade</b>	Final project: Comprehensive analysis of a company's prospects in China, India or Brazil. All course objectives are applicable to this project. Students will collect and research material for this presentation. <b>MBA objectives:</b> strategic thinking, critical thinking, global perspective, communication, ethics.	<a href="#">Team presentations #3 files should be submitted on Canvas before presentation; worth 20% of grade.</a> Students will be logged in by 6:00 p.m. to participate in the team presentations and Q/A sessions.

Table 1

### References:

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*Relevance to Marketing Educators, Researchers and Practitioners:* Given the programs and the significant growth in the economies of the BRICS nations

*Author Information:*

Hema A. Krishnan, Ph.D. is a Professor of Management and Entrepreneurship at Xavier University

Mee-Shew Cheung, Ph.D. is a Professor of Marketing and International Business at Xavier University

*Track:* Education/ Experiential Learning

*ID#:* 1392