Syllabus Foundations of Finance
Fall Semester 2008-2009
B01.2311.03

June 30, 2008

1 Instructor

Professor Stijn Van Nieuwerburgh
Office: KMEC 9-80
Phone: (212) 998-0673
Fax: (212) 995-4256
Email: svnieuwe@stern.nyu.edu
Web page: http://www.stern.nyu.edu/~svnieuwe
Office Hours: T and R, 4:30-6pm and 9-9.30pm (first in class room, then in my office), or
by appointment.

2 Teaching Assistants

The teaching assistant is Seth Weiss (seth.weiss@stern.nyu.edu). His office hours will be
announced on the class Blackboard site and in the first class. Seth will teach two review
sections (after class 2 and 4). Place and time of the review sections will be announced on
the class Blackboard page and in the first class.

3 Class Time

The class meets twice per week on T and R from 3.00-4.20pm during 13 weeks.
The first class is on T 09/02, the last class is on T 12/09.
There is no class on T 09/30, R 10/09, and R 11/27.
The final is in the week of 12/12-19 (exact dates TBA).
The venue is KMEC, Room 1-70.
Classroom Civility  Your behavior should respect your classmates desire to learn. Each lecture begins exactly at 3:00 p.m. and ends exactly at 4:20 p.m. I understand your busy schedules, but try not to come late. Because of the classroom layout, it is disruptive no matter how quiet you are. If you carry a cell phone or any other type of ‘audible alert device’, turn it off before entering class. Do not engage in side conversations during the lecture. Repeated occurrence of such disruptions will be reflected in the final grade. If you must miss a class or must come late, please let me know by email beforehand.

4  Readings

The textbooks for this class are:

1 “Investments” by Zvi Bodie, Alex Kane, Alan J. Marcus, 8th edition.

2 “Solutions Manual to accompany Investments” by Zvi Bodie, Alex Kane, Alan J. Marcus, Alan Marcus, 8th edition


We will mainly use [1], abbreviated BKM below. If you have an earlier edition of BKM (fourth, fifth, sixth, or seventh), you are fine. There are only minor changes between editions. Page and chapter numbers may vary slightly, but this is hardly a reason to buy a new copy. The main role of the textbooks is to serve as a source where you can review the material. BKM is at times very good and tightly linked to the material I cover, but a bit weaker and less related to the material I cover in class on some other topics. That being said, it is currently the best book on the market for our purposes, and you will need it to prepare before class and go over the material after class.

Book [2] will come in handy to solve practise questions. We will only use chapters 4 and 5 from book [3], abbreviated RWJ. These two chapters come as a supplement in the class material packet if you purchased your class material through the bookstore. The supplement [3] will only be used in class 2. If you did not buy [1] through the bookstore, you can purchase [2] and [3] separately, online on the publisher’s web site (https://ebooks.primisonline.com/eBookstore). Click on “Custom eBooks” and follow the links. [3] costs around $15.

The main class material is the course pack, which I will hand out in the first class. It contains all powerpoint slides that I use in class, handouts with important material covered in class, problem sets, and practise exams. You will want to take notes during class; space is available next to the slides and on the left page. The handouts at the end of the course pack are there to alleviate the amount of writing you need to do.

If you already own the “Essentials of Investment” textbook by the same authors instead, you will have more difficulty finding the corresponding chapters, sections, and exercise numbers because they are all different. You may want to upgrade to the “Investments” book.
**Staying Up-to-Date** The class web site on Blackboard contains links to recent articles in the financial press that complement the lectures. You are encouraged to follow financial and macroeconomic news in the Financial Times, Wall Street Journal, or The Economist. If you encounter an interesting article that you would like to share with the class, send me an email and I will post it on the class web site. This section of the Blackboard site is regularly update during the semester.

**5 Calculator**

You need a calculator for this class. It is a distinct advantage to have a financial calculator, but not an absolute requirement. If you plan to take other finance classes, you will get good use out of a financial calculator anyways. Standard financial calculators include the HP 12C (costs about $70), the HP 10B-II (costs about $30) and the TI BA-II Plus (costs about $30). You are expected to learn how to operate the calculator on your own. However, you can get help by attending the teaching assistants’ review sections (after class 2) or his office hours. Finally, I have included some useful slides in the course pack on how to work with the calculator.

**6 Communication**

The class web site is on Blackboard at [http://www.sternclasses.nyu.edu/](http://www.sternclasses.nyu.edu/). This is the central location where all teaching materials are posted. TA office hours and class announcements will be posted here. Problem sets are posted there as well. Solutions to the problem set will be posted no later than one week after the due date; they will not be distributed in paper form in class.

The class web site also contains the concept questions (see below), suggested problems, and some finance links and articles. Finally, there is a discussion board where the TAs and myself will participate on a regular basis to answer your questions. You are encouraged to answer each others’ questions. If you have a question, first turn to the discussion board; chances are the question has been asked and answered there already.

**7 Exams and Assignments**

Grades will be based on the final exam (40 percent), the midterm exam (30 percent), problem sets (20 percent), and participation (10 percent). The participation grade consists of class participation (2/3) and participation in the concept questions on Blackboard (1/3).

The Stern finance department follows a strict grading curve for graduate core courses (see finance department web site). I am required to strictly adhere to this curve. The finance curve for core courses is: A (10%), A- (15%), B+ (15%), B (40%), B- (15%), C (5%).
**Honor Code** You are responsible for maintaining Stern’s Honor Code which mandates zero tolerance for cheating and plagiarism. Violations of the honor code will be prosecuted with a minimum penalty of failure for the course, as required by code of conduct rules. If you become aware of any violations of the honor code you must take whatever steps are necessary to stop the violators. Per request of the dean, you must include a signed statement at the top of each problem set and exam, indicating that you adhere to the honor code. The statement is: ‘I pledge my honor that I have not violated the Stern Honor Code in the completion of this exam/problem set.’ It is in your best interest that the marketplace knows that Stern takes honesty seriously; it adds to the value of your degree.

**Exams** The midterm and final exams test your understanding of the key concepts in the class. They do not test your ability to memorize or to use your calculator. Rather they probe your deeper understanding of the material. As a result, they may be more challenging than the exams you are used to. To prepare for these exams, you should review the slides together with your own class notes, the handouts (at the end of the course pack), the concept questions, the required readings, the problem sets, the sample exams (located in your course pack behind the homework), and preferably the suggested problem sets and suggested readings. The final exam is *cumulative*.

You will be allowed one double-sided page of notes at the midterm exam and two double-sided pages of notes at the final exam. The sheets must be no larger than 8.5 inch by 11 inch. There are no restrictions on the content of the formula sheets, except that you are not allowed to reprint my powerpoint slides verbatim. You will be asked to turn in these formula sheets after the midterm and exam, but you will be able to recover the midterm sheet in the week after the midterm.

You are not allowed to take the exam questions home, and no written answers will be provided. There will be a post-midterm discussion in class 7. Once graded, you are allowed to come visit your midterm in my office, during office hours or by appointment. The same rules apply to the final. If you must miss an exam, you will be required to make it up after the semester is over. No laptops nor palm pilots are allowed on the exam.

**Concept Questions** After every class, concept questions are posted on Blackboard under *course documents*. The concept questions test your understanding of the main concepts taught in the class of that day. Usually, there are between 3 and 10 multiple choice questions per test. After you have reviewed the material from class, it should take you no more than 10 minutes to complete these concept questions. Every concept test is available for *ten days*, starting from the time the class ends. Participation in the concept questions counts towards your participation grade (it is one-third of your participation grade). However, I will not keep track of whether you answered the questions correctly or not. Basically, the concept questions are good preparation for the exam and a device that gives you an extra incentive not to fall behind. If you like to keep the concept questions for your records, you must print them out while the test is online. I do not distribute these questions by email and do not make the link available after the initial ten day period.
Problem Sets  There will be 4 problem sets over the course of the semester. For each problem set, you will be rewarded full credit if you have made a good-faith effort to answer all of the questions and if you hand in the problem set on time. Late problem sets will not be accepted. Answers to the problem set must be your own. You are encouraged to acknowledge any help you received on the front page of your problem set solution. The homework questions will be in the same spirit of the exam questions, but slightly easier. The reason is that they are your first confrontation with the implementation of the material.

Suggested Problems  After every class, suggested problems are posted on Blackboard under Assignments. These questions are intended you give you extra practice over and above the homework. You do not have to turn them in, and there is no credit for them. You can look up solutions in your solution manual [2]. The solutions to the questions in the RWJ booklet (class 2) are included in your course pack. Practise makes perfect: You are strongly encouraged to take the suggested problems seriously.

Study Groups  It is highly recommended that you regularly review the readings and class notes in a study group. Don’t wait until exam time to set up such a study group. By then it’s too late. You are encouraged to work on the problem sets with your study group, but you must hand in your own answers.

8 Course Content and Class Schedule

Content  The course is a rigorous, quantitative introduction to financial market structure and financial asset valuation. The main topics of the course are arbitrage, portfolio selection, equilibrium asset pricing (CAPM), fixed income securities and derivative pricing. There is a small section on project valuation.

You are expected to understand valuation formulas and be able to apply them to new problems. The appropriate tools necessary for solving these problems will be developed at each stage and practiced in the homework assignments. The models we will cover have immediate applications and implications for real-world financial decisions. Every effort will be made to relate the course material to current financial news.

Prerequisites  Students must be comfortable with statistics, linear algebra, calculus, and microeconomics. Students are strongly encouraged to study the review handout on statistics at the beginning of the semester (Handout H0 located at the end of your course pack). Alternatively or additionally, the Quantitative Review in appendix A of BKM will help you through refresh the statistics material.

Detailed Outline  Below is a detailed schedule of the date and topic of each class. Required readings are indicated as RR, suggested readings as SR. The readings starting with 'H' are handouts, situated at the end of your course packet. Homework due dates are also mentioned.
Class 1: Financial Instruments (T 09/02)
Overview of class RR: Syllabus
Financial Instruments RR: BKM 1.1-4, SR: BKM 1.5-7, 2

Class 2: Financial Markets (R 09/04)
Financial Markets RR: BKM 3.1-3, 3.5, 3.7 SR: BKM 3.4, 3.6, 3.8

Class 3: Performance of Securities (T 09/09)
PV, FV, annuities, perpetuities RR: RWJ 4, 5.1-2, H1-2

Class 4: Performance of Securities (R 09/11)
Compounding and Return measures RR: RWJ 5.3-4, BKM 5.2, 5.4-6, H3-5 SR: BKM 5.1, 5.3

Class 5: Portfolio Theory (T 09/16)
Positions and Portfolio Returns RR: H6-8, BKM 6.2 SR: BKM 5.7-10
Efficient Portfolios with Two Risky Securities RR: BKM 7.1-2, H9

Class 6: Portfolio Theory (R 09/18)
Efficient Portfolios with Two Risky Securities RR: BKM 7.1-2, H9
Optimal Portfolios and Investor Preferences RR: BKM 6.1

Homework 1 is due in class.

Class 7: Portfolio Theory (T 09/23)
Efficient and Optimal Portfolios with Riskless Asset RR: BKM 6.2-6, 7.3

Class 8: Portfolio Theory (R 09/25)
Efficient and Optimal Portfolios w/ Multiple Risky Assets RR: BKM 7.3-4, 8.1-4, H10-11 SR: BKM 7.5
Introduction to Capital Asset Pricing Model RR: BKM 9.1

Class 9: Capital Asset Pricing Model (R 10/02)
The Capital Asset Pricing Model RR: BKM 6.6, 8.5, 9.1-2, H12

Class 10: Capital Asset Pricing Model (T 10/07)
Applications of the CAPM RR: BKM: 10.1-2, H13-14 SR: BKM 9.3-6, RWJ 8.1, 8.4

Homework 2 is due in class.
Class 11: Capital Asset Pricing Model (T 10/14)
Beyond the CAPM RR: BKM: 9.3, 10.1, 10.5, 13.1-3 SR: BKM 10.2-4, 13.4-6

Class 12: Market Efficiency (R 10/16)
Market Efficiency RR: BKM 11 SR BKM 12

Class 13: Review (T 10/21)
Pre-midterm review

Class 14: Midterm (R 10/23)
Midterm exam.

Class 15: Equity Valuation (T 10/28)
Dividend Discount Models and Valuation Ratios RR: BKM 18.1 – 4, H16-17 , SR: BKM 18.5-6

Class 16: Equity Valuation (R 10/30)
Dividend Discount Models and Valuation Ratios RR: BKM 18.1 – 4, H16-17 , SR: BKM 18.5-6
Midterm evaluation (20 mins)

Class 17: Arbitrage (T 11/04)
Arbitrage and the Law of One Price RR: H15

Class 18: Fixed Income Securities (R 11/06)

Class 19: Fixed Income Securities (T 11/11)
Forward Rates and Yield Curve Theories RR: BKM 15.1-6, H20-22

Class 20: Fixed Income Securities (R 11/13)
Class 21: Options (T 11/18)
Options Basics and Strategies RR: BKM 20.1-3, H25-26

*Homework 3 is due in class.*

Class 22: Options (R 11/20)

Class 23: Options (T 11/25)
Black-Scholes Option Pricing Formula RR: BKM 21.4-5 SR: BKM 21.6

Class 24: Futures and Swaps (T 12/02)
Futures and Forwards RR: BKM 22.1, 22.3-5, 23.2, 23.5, H28 SR: BKM 22.2

Class 25: Futures and Swaps (R 12/04)
Exchange Rate Futures and Swaps RR: BKM 23.1, 23.4

Class 26: Review (T 12/09)
Pre-final review

*Homework 4 is due in class.*

Class 27: Final (TBA, in 12/12-19)
Final exam in class (180 minutes).