

ECO 2503H1 L0101
Financial Economics I (MA)
Fall Term 2015
M5 in WW 121, R 4-6 in OI 5170

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Office hours: W 2-3 and by appointment

Course Description

The aim of this course is to survey the major theories, tools, and results in asset pricing and portfolio choice. The course presents a general framework for pricing (financial) assets, and the economic foundations for how individual preferences impact these prices. The course also covers the role of financial markets in sharing risk in the economy, and presents recent empirical evidence on the determinants of asset returns.

Evaluation

There are three evaluation components:

1. A midterm (30%)
 - October 22, 4-6 in EX 310
2. An assignment (30%)
 - First part (3%) due by 4PM on Thursday, October 8
 - Final write-up (27%) due by 4PM on Thursday, November 26
3. A final exam (40%)
 - The exam is cumulative
 - Time and date will be announced on Blackboard (the portal)

The overall grade for the course will be calculated as the weighted average of the three evaluation components with the weights given above. There is one exception to this rule.

Students who

- a) have taken the midterm **and**
- b) achieved a passing grade on the midterm **and**
- c) did better on the final exam than on the midterm

will have their midterm grade dropped and the 30% weight of the midterm shifted to the final. That is, their overall grade for the course will be calculated from their assignment grade (with a weight of 30%) and their final exam grade (with a weight of 70%).

Permitted examination aids:

1. A simple pocket calculator (no graphic or financial calculators are allowed)
2. A formula sheet. The formula sheet must be hand-written i.e. not type-set, and not photocopied. It may contain only formulae or simple expressions. It may not contain any text, lists, bullet points, theorems, proofs, lemmas, derivations of formulae, graphs, solutions to past questions, or anything else other than formulae. Students are

expected to know the content of the formulae without labeling them. The purpose of allowing this examination aid is to decrease the need to memorize formulae. It is specifically not intended as a cheat sheet, or substitute for learning the course material in general (other than memorizing formulae). The size specifications of the formula sheet are as follows:

- a. for the midterm, you may use one side of an A4/letter (210mm × 297mm or 216mm × 279mm) page with formulae.
- b. For the final exam, you may use two sides of an A4/letter page.

In line with the University of Toronto's policy on academic integrity, formula sheets that do not comply with these specifications on content and size are, by definition, unauthorized examination aids. As a result,

- i. they will be taken away from the student during a test or examination **and**
- ii. any student attempting to use such a formula sheet will be charged with academic misconduct.

Teaching Assistant

The teaching assistant (TA) for the course is [Shiny Zhang](#). She is responsible for grading midterms and assignments. She will hold office hours after the midterm to address any questions regarding the grading of the midterm. An announcement will be made on Blackboard to inform you of the time and venue of such office hours.

General Policies

Appeals

If you appeal to re-grade one of the midterm, assignment, or exam questions, I will re-grade the entire midterm/assignment/exam. Note that this may (and in the past usually has) lead to a lower overall grade. Your complaint has to be in writing and you must give a detailed outline as to why and where you think that the assessment is inaccurate. An exception to this rule is if you claim that a mistake was made when adding up your grades.

Not handing in an assignment

If you anticipate that you may miss the deadline for an assignment deliverable, you should contact me immediately. Late assignments carry a penalty of 10% per hour.

Practice Problems

In most sets of lecture slides I will include some practice problems. I will also post solutions (or solution outlines) to selected problems. I will also post past exams on Blackboard – these will not have solutions. Please contact me during office hours if you have questions about how to solve practice problems or questions from past exams. No further practice problems will be provided.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a severe academic offense.

By submitting your assignment you certify that you have read and understood the university's policies on plagiarism. Please also consult the [university's website on academic writing](#). If I detect plagiarism, I will go through the standard process for academic misconduct.

Contact

For questions about the class material, please come to my office hours.

E-mails and the discussion board on the portal should be used only for questions regarding logistics and organization of the course. If your question is of general interest, please post it on the discussion board. I will try to answer e-mails and posts on the discussion board by the end of the next business day. E-mail queries about class material that require lengthy answers will receive the following answer: "Please see me during my office hours." When sending an e-mail please use your University of Toronto e-mail address. Also, please mention the course code, "ECO2503" in the subject line of your message.

Acceptable Medical Notes

- The only accepted note is a fully completed [University of Toronto Medical Certificate](#).
- It must be **original** and completed by a qualified medical doctor (e.g., not an acupuncturist, chiropractor, or other health care professional).
- The doctor's OHIP registration number must be provided on the note.
- If you miss an exam or midterm, the note must clearly state that on the date of exam or midterm, the student was too sick to write the test. Illness before the test is not sufficient grounds for missing the test. Nor will I accept notes that indicate that the student would have performed "sub-optimally".

Feedback

Student feedback is the most important resource to continuously improve the course, and I take it seriously. I collect feedback in two formats.

- 1) Weekly (short) feedback: each week, you are welcome to submit your opinion about the week's class, indicating what went well and what needs improvement.
- 2) "Halftime" evaluation: halfway through the course, after the midterm, you will be invited to answer a set of more detailed questions about your opinion on the course.

Links to both these questionnaires will be made available on Blackboard.

Providing feedback is voluntary, strictly anonymous, and much appreciated.

Course Outline and Readings

The complete outline and list of readings will be posted on Blackboard during the first week of the course.

Planned coverage

1. An introduction to asset pricing, net present value, internal rate of return
2. Investor preferences and risk
3. Bond pricing
4. Mean-variance analysis and portfolio choice
5. The Capital Asset Pricing Model and various extensions: asset pricing with exogenous risks
6. Arbitrage Pricing Theory, factor asset pricing models
7. The law of one price, arbitrage, state prices, stochastic discount factor
8. Consumption-based asset pricing, the equity premium puzzle, ICAPM, Hansen-Jagannathan bounds
9. Empirical evidence on security returns, efficient financial markets