

Doctoral course  
Corporate Finance  
Fall term 2017, Monday, 9.00 a.m. - 12.00 p.m.  
University of Zurich  
Syllabus version August 20, 2017

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## Faculty

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## Teaching Assistant

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## Purpose

This course offers a graduate level introduction into corporate finance. The primary goal of the class is that students acquire an awareness and understanding of important issues in corporate finance. The course focuses on presenting “classic” contributions, but will point you to current papers where possible. There will also be time to discuss potential avenues for future interesting research questions. In doing so, some compromises have to be made in terms of how detailed the treatment of each topic can be.

The course also presents useful tools from contract theory and game theory. Thus, the course also aims at training students to use these tools for their own research.

Although the course’s focus is theoretical, we will attempt to relate models to real world phenomena. There is a separate course on empirical corporate finance, but we will also discuss several empirical papers.

## Target group and prerequisites

This course is primarily designed for doctoral students in finance, although it is also open to doctoral students from other social sciences and to interested students in the MScQF program at the University of Zurich.

Since modern corporate finance and organizational economics theory relies heavily on game

and contract theory, participants are expected to be familiar with basic concepts in these areas of microeconomics. The course will emphasize economics rather than mathematical difficulties.

### Logistics

We will generally meet weekly in the first two thirds of the term. The course schedule is as follows (some changes are likely to be made as we go along).

Meeting time: Monday, 9 a.m. - 12.00 p.m., unless indicated differently below

Room: TBA

Lecture	Faculty	Date	Topic
1	AW	Sept 18, 9-10.45 a.m.	Introduction, logistics, overview of the course topics; Capital structure 1
2	AW	Sept 25	Capital structure 2
3	AW	Oct 2	Payout policy; Agency and executive compensation 1
4	AW	Oct 9	Agency and executive compensation 2; Boards of directors
-	-	Oct 16	No class
5	AW	Oct 23	Relational contracts, incomplete contracts
-	-	Oct 30	No class
6	AW	Nov 6	Student presentations
7	AW	Nov 13	Behavioral corporate finance
8	KN	Nov 20	Auctions, Liquidity, Money Markets
9	AW	Nov 27	Student presentations
		Jan 15, 2018	Written exam

Problem set	Distributed	Due date
1	Sept 18	Sept 25, 9.00 a.m.
2	Sept 25	Oct 9, 9.00 a.m.
3	Oct 2	Oct 23, 9.00 a.m.
4	Oct 9	Oct 30, 9.00 a.m.
5	Sept 25	Nov 6, Nov 27, Dec 4

Problem set 5 is a discussion of a paper and a referee report. On November 6 and 27, respectively, students will present a recent working paper (out of a list provided by AW). By December 5, you will have to deliver a written referee report on that paper (which should reflect also those issues that came up in your presentation).

If this is not a mandatory course for you (i.e., if you are not in the Department of Banking and Finance's track B doctoral program) please send an email to Stefano Ramelli (and cc Alex Wagner), indicating your affiliation and attaching your CV.

### Requirements

To pass this class, you are expected to fulfill the following requirements:

1. Class participation

2. Problem sets
3. Presentations
4. Referee report
5. Exam

The weighting will be: Problem sets 20%, Presentation/discussion 15%, Referee report 15%, Exam 50%. Class participation can lead to discretionary grade adjustments.

Please abide by the following rules. You have to submit all problem sets:

- 1) printed out at the beginning of class on the indicated date AND by email to stefano.ramelli@bf.uzh.ch. For the file name, use the format PSx\_Lastname1Lastname2.pdf, where x stands for the problem set number. Thus, if Kjell Nyborg and Alex Wagner are submitting the problem set 3 together, the correct file name is PS3\_NyborgWagner.pdf
- 2) typed up in either Scientific Workplace, LaTeX, MS Word, or another word processor and turned into a pdf (make sure all formulas and graphs are readable)

You are encouraged to submit the problem sets in groups of two or three students. There are no make-up problem sets or assignments. Late problem sets are not accepted.

### **Reading list**

A recent textbook on corporate finance is Jean Tirole's "The Theory of Corporate Finance". You might find it useful as a reference. It covers a wide array of topics, more than we can cover in this class, and in a somewhat different way, but it certainly is very well done. An excellent game theory book is furthermore Drew Fudenberg's and Jean Tirole's "Game Theory".

For a good introduction to contract theory, we recommend Bernard Salanié's "The Economics of Contracts". The best comprehensive reference is "Contract Theory" by Patrick Bolton and Mathias Dewatripont.

A list of papers will be distributed.

### **On modeling and paper-writing**

The following three references (two of which are freely available on the web) are particularly useful:

- Thomson, William. A Guide for the Young Economist. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001.
- King, Gary. "Publication, Publication." PS: Political Science and Politics 39, 131-159 (2006).
- Varian, Hal R. "How to Build an Economic Model in Your Spare Time." 2009.