Accounting 381N (part 1) – Fall 2015

Financial Statement Analysis

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Course Summary: This Financial Statement Analysis course focuses on using an array of financial information to best determine the why behind past performance. To achieve this we combine quantitative and qualitative factors to understand drivers of performance and to tell the story of the firm. With a solid understanding of the past, we move towards motivating sound forecasts and briefly discuss well-supported inputs to valuation models.

This course is advised for individuals who possess all of the following:

1) a dedication to learning and a willingness to develop new skills and perspectives;
2) an interest in how businesses operate, make decisions, change and report their performance;
3) a willingness to benefit from and contribute to the UT/McCombs’ educational experience;
4) a general, but strong, understanding of financial accounting at an introductory level.

What you should expect:
Historically this has been a challenging class that requires a commitment. It is not challenging as you must memorize complex formulas that you could easily look up in the real world, but as it will challenge perspectives and require critical thinking and the synthesis of information. This is also a class that actively shuns memorization of terms and formulas and the regurgitation of anything. We will not waste your time (and your educational investment) with memorizing items such as ratios or formulas or emphasizing jargon and catchphrases over thoughtful analysis. Instead we will focus on more useful ways of approaching various issues. Therefore, you may hear many “Yes, but…” questions: “Yes, but in your own words.” “Yes, but why? “Yes, that is the general economic argument, but how has it played out in this scenario?” “Yes, that is the change, but what drove that change? …We will get dirty trying to best understand various firms and how to best use financial information. You need to be involved in these discussions.

How to do well and get the most out of the experience:
This class is also one that has a straightforward plan for success as directly affirmed by former students. Students who truly commit to all of the following usually end up with solid grades: (1) consistently preparing for class; (2) being active learners within the classroom and on the Discussion Board and (3) carefully reviewing the material after class.

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1 This is a draft syllabus. The contents may change up to the first day of class. After that point, the specific class-by-class coverage may change, but the rest of this syllabus will remain. The official syllabus and schedule will be posted and updated on Canvas.
A Broader Background of the Course

Our objectives include:

- Increase our understanding of financial filings (including financial statements, managers’ commentaries, footnotes, and other sources of financial information) in order to:
  - Understand how firms operate and create value—*we put considerable emphasis on understanding how financial information helps us understand and guide operating decisions.*
  - Concisely articulate the firm’s past—*without this, valuation and forecasting could be misguided so we must be able to tell the story of the firm.*
  - Increase our understanding and ability to use tools to analyze information presented in financial statements. Understand the benefits and limitations of financial information provided in financial filings and the motivation for and process of making adjustments to this information—*we will adjust, change and challenge ratios, metrics and formulas to ensure they work in various situations.*
  - Use our understanding of the firm and its financials to make informed predictions about future performance—*we will stress how understanding financial information provides us with an excellent framework for considering the future.* Motivate, understand, construct and implement various inputs in valuation models—*we will only briefly note the mechanics of valuation with slightly more of a focus on stressing the more useful and challenging steps of motivating inputs to valuation as real valuation is not only a mechanical exercise.*
  - The course will be taught using a combination of examples, discussion questions, cases and homework problems. We will cover concepts using various firms’ historical and current financial data.

To achieve these objectives, during the semester we will learn a framework for business analysis and valuation. The steps in the framework include:

1. Business Strategy Analysis: The purpose of business strategy analysis is to assess the profit potential of the firm at a qualitative level. This involves an understanding of the firm’s strategy and its industry and considering how these affect and are affected by the firm’s financial performance.

2. Financial Analysis: The purpose of financial analysis is to assess the firm’s historical financial performance in the context of its goals and strategies. Tools used for financial analysis include ratio analysis, cash flow analysis, and common size financial statements. *Ratio Analysis is not computing ratios (i.e., division), but carefully using and changing them to provide us with information.*

3. Accounting Analysis: The purpose of accounting analysis is to develop an understanding of whether a firm’s accounting captures its true underlying economic condition(s). This involves understanding accounting transactions, identifying accounting flexibility, evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies and estimates, and at times, altering financial statements to enhance decision making.

4. Valuation/Prospective Analysis: The purpose of valuation/prospective analysis is to forecast the firm’s future financial performance and determine a potential valuation of the firm—*our best assessment of intrinsic value.* To do this we will learn the mechanics and intricacies of forecasting financial statements and we will (very briefly) cover the components and usage of valuation models.

We will review (and learn) accounting concepts as this knowledge is critical to making decisions with financial information. However, the primary objective of the course is *not to improve our understanding of Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (US GAAP or IFRS);* the goal is to improve our ability to interpret and use financial statements in a variety of settings including a primary focus on credit and equity analyses and supplemental coverage of corporate finance, planning and control. *This is not a journal entry class.*
Structure, Materials and Logistics

Course Structure

- The class format involves coverage of the main areas and tools noted above. In addition, there will be a considerable amount of discussions/cases that focus on specific firms and specific financial issues. These cases will involve a careful analysis of the financials, the opportunity to dig deeper to support (or challenge) information that is presented, and the consideration of the benefits and limitations of various tools, metrics and ratios.
- A tentative schedule of class meetings is attached to the end of this document. This schedule may be revised and all updates will be posted on Canvas and emailed or discussed in class.

Materials

  - Additional Suggested Reading: Accounting for Value by Stephen Penman; Ben Graham’s *The Intelligent Investor*; Michael Lewis’s *The Big Short*; Pat Dorsey’s *The Little Book that Builds Wealth* and Michael Shearn’s *The Investment Checklist: The Art of In-Depth Research*
- Throughout the course we will be examining publicly available material including corporate press releases, corporate filings (10K’s, etc.), analyst reports, and articles from the business press. When appropriate, these and other supplemental information (or links to these documents) will be provided via Canvas. You will be responsible for downloading and printing these articles.
- We will also have a Discussion Board on Canvas, with both required and additional material.
- *To ensure the highest dissemination of information and to maintain a fair playing field, all non-personal questions must be asked on the Discussion Board.*
Assignments and Grading Information (page 1 of 3)

Course Requirements and Grading

This course is administratively one-half of a full course of record. Your grade in the course will be an equally-weighted combination of your grades in the two halves. A student in the bottom 5% of both the FSA and Managerial classes runs the risk of not passing the class.

Your grade in the FSA portion of the course will be determined as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exam (10/2/2015)</th>
<th>50%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cases</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>100%</td>
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Description of Requirements

Exams (50%)

There will be one exam worth 50% of your grade. It will be held on Friday, October 2, 2015. This is an FSA cumulative exam covering all FSA classes. The exam will involve the lessons from class applied to a set of financial information from one or a small number of publicly traded firms. Please notify me immediately if you have a conflict with the exam date. All notifications of exam conflicts must be received at the start of the FSA portion of the class.

The exam is primarily built around class discussions and cases and involves your analysis of actual firms’ financial information. *This exam is not one for which you should try to cram. You prepare for the exam by doing the work day to day in this class and then by relaxing the week before the exam. Cramming is not useful and a class for which you can cram is a good example of a class not worth taking.*

Cases (40%)

The primary objective of the Cases is to help you review the material before attending class. The fancy term for this is the “flipped classroom” but this is simply old-fashioned education from your rather old-school professor that helps ensure you can master the material by taking ownership before class. All Cases are due before the start of each class. These Cases will be posted on Canvas.

*There are five Cases required by all students. In addition, Case #0 is optional. Students who choose to complete this case will have their Case grades allocated over six Cases (if Case #0 is higher than their average). Students who do not choose to complete Case #0, or those whose Case #0 is lower than their average on Cases #1-#5, will have their homework grades allocated over five Cases. Completing Case #0 may not improve your grade, but it cannot bring it down.*

You are required to submit ALL of Cases #1 through #5. Cases cannot be submitted late. Cases must be submitted on Canvas in the respective link. You can work alone or in a pair on all of the Cases. The goal of pairs is to enable you to actively share ideas but still be involved. There is a cap to group sizes as large groups remove the benefit from working through the material. Whether you are flying solo, or working in a pair, ALL names must be on the final submission. If a name is missing, no one gets credit. Directly sharing files or copying answer (including copied answers with minor edits) across groups is a violation of the policies of our University and will not be accepted. A pair must only submit one copy of the Case.
Assignments and Grading Information (page 2 of 3)

In the past, students have effectively used Skype, Facetime, Google Docs, Dropbox, and Comments and Track Changes in Microsoft Word to collaborate from different locations and good, old-fashioned meetings to collaborate in person (e.g. at Gabriel’s). All assignments should be submitted electronically through Canvas using a program that is compatible with Microsoft Office. You are responsible for uploading the final version, checking and re-checking any issue with formatting or other errors before submission.

Case Grading: The grading for the cases will be as follows: a C or lower for basic effort, but incorrect or insufficient answers; roughly a B for well-supported answers that are internally consistent, but may miss the main idea; and roughly an A for well-supported answers that are internally consistent and capture all of the main ideas as discussed in class and error-free submissions for Spreadsheets (when applicable). Many questions offer more than one right answer and students can receive a good score without having answers that are exactly the same as the class discussion. Please note: obtaining a grade for effort requires more than putting random words on the page—your answer must have support and make sense, even if it is not the perfect answer. Tautological answers do not constitute effort.2

Class participation and leadership (10%)

Much of class is conducted in a discussion setting. We will not spend much time going over basic computations or mechanics, rather we will analyze specific firms and discuss which metrics are important, the reasons for our approach, and the implications of our choices. The assignments are geared to prepare you to participate in and learn from these discussions. Accordingly, your completion of the assignments and your participation in our discussions are vital. If you are not involved in the discussion on your own, you should prepare for cold calling. At times, I will only be a facilitator of your discussions with each other. After most classes, I will make class notes, with particular attention to the quality of comments or questions, not the quantity. You do not need to be correct to participate: insightful questions and thoughtful answers are also important and I encourage students to answer, even when they are unsure. Moreover, a strong, smart and vibrant3 academic community is a part of why you and your classmates are here at UT.

Consistent with what is noted above, you are required to attend all classes. As your absence can detract from the learning experience of others, if you will miss part of or a whole class, please post to our Discussion Board before (or after) class when this occurs. The post can include an apology to your classmates, if sincere, and can include whatever information you believe is both personally and professionally prudent. If, for any reason, you are uncomfortable posting the circumstance to the class, you may email me.

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2 From Dictionary.com: "Needless repetition of an idea, especially in words other than those of the immediate context, without imparting additional force or clearness."

3 Maybe the next UT coach will have the last name Vibrant.
Assignments and Grading Information (page 3 of 3)

Here’s a general idea of how I plan to grade your class participation over the course of the semester:

- **Outstanding Contributor:** Consistent and sustained contributions to large-group discussions reflect thorough preparation. Ideas offered are usually substantive, provide good insights and sometimes change the direction of the class for the better. Arguments, when presented, are generally well-substantiated and often persuasive. If this person were not a member of the class, the quality of the large-group discussions would be diminished significantly. In addition to exceptional large-group discussion contributions, also actively participates in small-group discussions.

- **Good Contributor:** Consistent contributions to large-group discussions reflect satisfactory preparation. Ideas offered are usually substantive, generally provide useful insights, and occasionally offer a new direction for the discussion. Arguments, if presented, are reasonably well-substantiated. If this person were not a member of the class, the quality of the large-group discussions would be diminished. In addition, also offers comments in small-group discussions.

- **Marginal Contributor:** Generally routine contributions to large-group discussions reflect some minimal preparation. Ideas offered are occasionally substantive but seldom provide clear insights or new directions for the discussion. Arguments may be occasionally presented but are generally not well-substantiated. If this person were not a member of the class, the quality of the large-group discussions would be diminished only slightly.

- **Non-participant (around 0-2 percentage points out of 10%):** This person has maintained attendance to some extent but has said little or nothing in class; hence there is no adequate basis for evaluation. If this person were not a member of the class, the quality of the discussions would be unchanged.

- **Disruptive Contributor (negative points):** If present in class at all, contributions to discussions reflect inadequate preparation. Ideas offered are rarely substantive, provide few, if any, insights and never offer a constructive direction. At best, contributions are obscure, confused, and indicate a lack of familiarity with the fact of the issues under discussion. At worst, comments demonstrate disrespect for others. If this person were not a member of the class, valuable airtime would be saved.
  - Disruption includes consistently arriving late, leaving or packing up early or using a cell phone during class. This includes texting. I hope no one achieves this grade as this represents a major lack of professionalism and respect for our University.

Our class will also make use of Discussion Board. This is the forum for outside-of-class questions related to assignments, our class coverage and any related current events. Constructive Discussion Board involvement can help enhance your Class Participation and Leadership grade, but the primary driver of performance is the classroom experience. (Logistical questions such as “When is the exam?” or “Where is the Excel file?” are always welcomed, but cannot enhance your grade.)

**Grading Disputes**

I will make every effort to grade all of your work fairly and accurately, but grading errors can occur. If you believe there’s an error, you may request a re-grading of the assignment. Be aware, however, that grading errors can occur in both directions - errors can make grades too high as well as too low. Therefore, if you request a re-grading, your entire assignment will be re-graded, and all grading errors will be corrected. By requesting a re-grade, you accept the possibility that your grade may go either up or down. To request a re-grade, you must submit a written request to me within **72 hours from the time in which the assignment’s grade was released** to students (whether or not you were present in class on that day or checking email). The request must be accompanied by the original, if I do not retain it, and must state the area of dispute, your recommendation for change in grade, and an explanation or justification for your recommendation. The re-grade request must refer to the guidelines established in this syllabus.
Academic Integrity and University Policies (page 1 of 2)

Cheating involves copying work across groups, cheating on the exam, plagiarizing your assignments and other things as well. Don’t cheat as (1) it is wrong; (2) the costs far outweigh the benefits: you don’t want to get kicked out in a short-sighted attempt to make a B a B+; and (3) there is a very good chance that your cheating will be revealed and we will all be extremely disappointed.

Policy on Scholastic Dishonesty

The McCombs School of Business has no tolerance for acts of scholastic dishonesty. The responsibilities of both students and faculty with regard to scholastic dishonesty are described in detail in the BBA Program’s Statement on Scholastic Dishonesty at http://www.mccombs.utexas.edu/BBA/Code-of-Ethics.aspx. By teaching this course, I have agreed to observe all faculty responsibilities described in that document. By enrolling in this class, you have agreed to observe all student responsibilities described in that document. If the application of the Statement on Scholastic Dishonesty to this class or its assignments is unclear in any way, it is your responsibility to ask me for clarification. Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. Since dishonesty harms the individual, all students, the integrity of the University, and the value of our academic brand, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. You should refer to the Student Judicial Services website at http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/ to access the official University policies and procedures on scholastic dishonesty as well as further elaboration on what constitutes scholastic dishonesty.

Additional Important Notifications

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, 512-471-6259, http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/.

Religious Holy Days

By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, you will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

Students with Personal Challenges

If you face any personal challenges that may affect your coursework or need advice or assistance for any serious health or personal matter, please reach out to the Student Emergency Services. Information can be found here: http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/emergency/
Academic Integrity and University Policies (page 2 of 2)

Campus Safety
Please note the following recommendations regarding emergency evacuation from the Office of Campus Safety and Security, 512-471-5767, http://www.utexas.edu/safety:

- Occupants of buildings on The University of Texas at Austin campus are required to evacuate buildings when a fire alarm is activated. Alarm activation or announcement requires exiting and assembling outside.
- Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of each classroom and building you may occupy. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when entering the building.
- Students requiring assistance in evacuation should inform the instructor in writing during the first week of class.
- In the event of an evacuation, follow the instruction of faculty or class instructors.
- Do not re-enter a building unless given instructions by the following: Austin Fire Department, The University of Texas at Austin Police Department, or Fire Prevention Services office.
- Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL): 512-232-5050
- Further information regarding emergency evacuation routes and emergency procedures can be found at: http://www.utexas.edu/emergency.
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<th>Session</th>
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<th>Topic</th>
<th>Cases</th>
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| 1       | Thursday   | This class introduces our class—Financial Statement Analysis (FSA). During this class we will discuss how companies’ strategies and industry conditions are reflected in financial statements and discuss the information environment in which firms operate. We will begin analyzing firms by critical success factors.  
- Case 0 is designed to review some of the main aspects from Financial Accounting. We will not cover this in class, but you can post comments or questions to our Discussion Board.  
- Case 1 is designed to start our exposure to FSA and we will build off of this in class. | Case #0: Acme Packets Case  
Case #1: Intro to Analyzing Firms: Both are due: Sunday Aug 16 11:59 pm.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 2       | Friday     | During this class we will expand our analysis by focusing on a few specific topics that are a part of our Accounting Analysis. These include examining revenue, expenses, operating assets and liabilities, investments, risk mitigation and other areas critical to operating our firms.                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Case #2 Due: Aug 20 11:59 pm.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| 3       | Saturday   | During this class we will discuss and use various financial tools to examine Whole Foods Market between 2006 and 2015. The analysis of Whole Foods Markets will involve ratio and profitability analysis including the DuPont Analysis and the decomposition of these measures. We will carefully consider various ratios and tools and how they can help us understand the main drivers of firm performance. We will begin our assessment of WFM’s cash flows.                                                                 | Case #3 Due Aug 22 at 8 am.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 4       | Friday     | During this class we will expand our analysis by focusing on a deeper assessment Cash Flows and other critical areas of profitability. We will dig into the specific inflows and outflows of cash to fully assess firms’ choices and the implications of these choices. To continue our analysis, we will focus on working capital and measures of liquidity.                                                                                                                                  | Case #4 Due: Sept 4, 8 am.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 5       | Saturday   | We will build upon our knowledge to date to discuss the process of forecasting financial statements. We will discuss the process of motivating inputs for forecasting in either an internal (budgeting) or external (pro forma) framework. We will stress the understanding of using our financial statements together and carefully determining economic drivers. After working through this forecasting process we will briefly discuss the valuation process, the inputs to this process, and how our assessment of financial informative guides valuation. | Case #5 Due Sept 18 8 am                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| 6       | Friday     | Exam: Our exam will involve qualitative and quantitative questions based on the actual financial statements of a firm not extensively discussed during class.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |

*Schedule may be amended.

Case and class details are provided on Canvas, see each specific class page.