



1. General Information

Course Subject	FINA
Course Number	3384
Course Title	Behavioural and sociological finance
Academic Years	2024-2025
Grading Method	Letter

2. Instructors

Dr FENG, Vince
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Subclasses: 2A

4. Course Description

Course Description	This course covers current developments in finance. Possible topics include security trading and market making, venture analysis, financial contracting, investment strategies for local markets and other current issues in finance. The exact topics to be offered will be determined by the lecturer(s).
Free Elective	Yes

5. Course Objectives

1. This course will survey recent research on possible mispricing in financial markets—opportunities for excess returns—due to investor psychology or sociological constraints such as social structure or culture. The goal is to examine the main critiques of rational risk-based asset pricing from the behavioural and sociological perspectives, while also critically examining these perspectives.

2. Broad themes are the practical limits of arbitrage, models of psychological behaviour, social structural and cultural constraints to pricing, and predictability of security returns. Specific topics include market bubbles and crashes, value vs. growth, momentum, the money management industry, underwriting, and option pricing. Practical implications for security trading and investment strategy are explored.

3. Understanding the pattern of returns on different securities requires learning facts, theories, and statistical tools. The facts include risk and return, factor and sector stratification, momentum, market frictions, and relationships between market actors. The course focuses on theories from cognitive psychology and economic sociology, although a very brief, high-level overview of risk-based and present value asset pricing models will be provided. The tools include portfolio analysis, multifactor models, and forecasting regressions.

4. Students will work in groups on weekly assignments throughout the course to develop familiarity and skill with these facts and theories. Tutorials can be provided for advanced students who also wish to learn the statistical tools.

6. Faculty Learning Goals

Goal 1: Acquisition and internalization of knowledge of the programme discipline

6. Faculty Learning Goals
Goal 2: Application and integration of knowledge
Goal 3: Inculcating professionalism
Goal 4: Developing global outlook
Goal 5: Mastering communication skills
Goal 6: Cultivating leadership

7. Course Learning Outcomes						
Course Teaching and Learning Activities	Aligned Faculty Learning Goals					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
CLO1. Understand the concepts of modern financial theory and practical tools essential to portfolio management and investment decisions.	✓	✓				
CLO2. Discuss the theory and practical tools through critical review of academic research and group presentations.	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
CLO3. Comprehend knowledge on the various issues related to the behavioral and sociological critiques of rational risk-based asset price theory and empirical methodology as it relates to securities trading and investment strategy.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

8. Course Teaching and Learning Activities		
Course Teaching and Learning Activities #	Expected Study Hours	Study Load (% of study)
T&L1. Lecture	36	30
T&L2. Consultation	10	8.3
T&L3. Group Assignment	30	25
T&L4. Individual Paper	24	20
T&L5. Self study	20	16.7
	Total: 120	Total: 100

9. Assessment Methods			
Assessment Methods	Description	Weight %	Aligned Course Learning Outcomes
A1. Weekly Group Assignments	<p>Weekly critical reviews of a journal article.</p> <p>Students will be organized into groups, with each group working on weekly assignments that will form the basis of classroom participation, as well as a mid-term case study. Starting in week 2, groups are expected to have read the materials and critically examined one journal article. Each group will present its critical review of the article. The format of the weekly critical review is a short one-page written report and group response in class, the details of</p>	30%	1,2,3

9. Assessment Methods

	which will be explained week 1.		
A2. Mid-term Group Assignment	<p>Group case study not more than 2000 words addressing a question relating to behavioural finance.</p> <p>Groups will work on a case study from behavioural finance. The question will be distributed two weeks before the mid-term assignment due date. Each group will submit a short paper of no more than 2000 words addressing a question related to the case study. The mid-term assignment is to be assessed on a group basis, with individual variation based on group feedback on the contributions of each individual member and an in-class Q&A session.</p>	30%	1,2,3
A3. Final Individual Paper	<p>Individual paper not more than 3000 words addressing a question relating to sociological finance.</p> <p>The take-home examination is a case study from economic sociology and will be distributed in the last class of the semester. The submission will be due by May 10 (absolute deadline – no extension will be approved). The maximum length for the take-home examination is 3000 words (including footnotes but excluding bibliography).</p>	40%	1,2,3

Assessment Rubrics

A1. Weekly Group Assignments	
A+,A,A-	Strong evidence of superb ability to fulfill the intended learning outcomes of the course at all levels of learning: describe, apply, evaluate, and synthesis
B+,B,B-	Strong evidence of the ability to fulfill the intended learning outcomes of the course at all levels of learning: describe, apply, evaluate, and synthesis
C+,C,C-	Evidence of adequate ability to fulfill the intended learning outcomes of the course at low levels of learning such as describe and apply but not at high levels of learning such as evaluate and synthesis
D+,D	Evidence of basic familiarity with the subject
F	Little evidence of basic familiarity with the subject
A2. Mid-term Group Assignment	
A+,A,A-	Strong evidence of superb ability to fulfill the intended learning outcomes of the course at all levels of learning: describe, apply, evaluate, and synthesis
B+,B,B-	Strong evidence of the ability to fulfill the intended learning outcomes of the course at all levels of learning: describe, apply, evaluate, and synthesis
C+,C,C-	Evidence of adequate ability to fulfill the intended learning outcomes of the course at low levels of learning such as describe and apply but not at high levels of learning such as evaluate and synthesis
D+,D	Evidence of basic familiarity with the subject
F	Little evidence of basic familiarity with the subject

Assessment Rubrics

A3. Final Individual Paper	
A+,A,A-	Strong evidence of superb ability to fulfill the intended learning outcomes of the course at all levels of learning: describe, apply, evaluate, and synthesis
B+,B,B-	Strong evidence of the ability to fulfill the intended learning outcomes of the course at all levels of learning: describe, apply, evaluate, and synthesis
C+,C,C-	Evidence of adequate ability to fulfill the intended learning outcomes of the course at low levels of learning such as describe and apply but not at high levels of learning such as evaluate and synthesis
D+,D	Evidence of basic familiarity with the subject
F	Little evidence of basic familiarity with the subject

10. Course Grade Descriptors

A+,A,A-	Strong evidence of superb ability to fulfill the intended learning outcomes of the course at all levels of learning: describe, apply, evaluate, and synthesis
B+,B,B-	Strong evidence of the ability to fulfill the intended learning outcomes of the course at all levels of learning: describe, apply, evaluate, and synthesis
C+,C,C-	Evidence of adequate ability to fulfill the intended learning outcomes of the course at low levels of learning such as describe and apply but not at high levels of learning such as evaluate and synthesis
D+,D	Evidence of basic familiarity with the subject
F	Little evidence of basic familiarity with the subject

11. Course Content and Tentative Teaching Schedule

Topic/Session	Content	Assignments	Other information
			Critical fact-based examination of all theories, orthodox and heterodox, will be the focal point of the course. Lectures will teach the critical method of examining a theory's hypothesis, assumptions, data, and methodology, as well as the ability to develop alternative hypotheses with the goal of constructively criticizing any theory. Student participation is vital for learning, and students are expected to participate in class by presenting their critiques of the theories discussed.
	Students will be organized into groups, with each group working on weekly assignments that will form the basis of classroom participation, as well as a	Weekly group assignments	

11. Course Content and Tentative Teaching Schedule

	mid-term case study. Starting in week 2, groups are expected to have read the materials and critically examined one journal article. Each group will present its critical review of the article. The format of the weekly critical review is a short one-page written report and group response in class, the details of which will be explained week 1.		
	Groups will work on a case study from behavioural finance. The question will be distributed two weeks before the mid-term assignment due date. Each group will submit a short paper of no more than 2000 words addressing a question related to the case study. The mid-term assignment is to be assessed on a group basis, with individual variation based on group feedback on the contributions of each individual member and an in-class Q&A session.	Mid-term Group Assignment	
	The take-home examination is a case study from economic sociology and will be distributed in the last class of the semester. The submission will be due by May 10 (absolute deadline – no extension will be approved). The maximum length for the take-home examination is 3000 words (including footnotes but excluding bibliography).	Final Individual Assignment	

12. Required/Recommended Readings & Online Materials

Reading	<p>Distributed materials will be made available online each week. All readings are journal articles and book chapters; hard copies will not be distributed. The lecture presentations will also be distributed electronically after each class and forms the core “textbook” for the course. Note that the lecture notes complement the readings, they do not replicate them, hence everything should be read in detail.</p> <p>Optional materials are truly OPTIONAL: students should not feel compelled to read these materials. They are provided solely for advanced students who in their own free time outside the course wish to learn more about the subject matter. Some optional materials are extremely advanced, and no tutorials will be provided (they are purely for the interested student’s own reading pleasure).</p>
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13. Means / Processes for Student feedback on Course

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✓	Conducting mid-term survey in additional to SETL around the end of the semester
	Online response via Moodle site
	Others

14. Course Policy

1. Attendance

Attendance is required but not recorded, and is highly recommended for the student's own self-interest as lectures explore the key focus areas of future assignments (much of which may be verbal and not written down in the lecture presentation). Moreover, you are responsible for all material covered in class, including any announcements pertaining to the class, which may not be included in other materials.

2. Plagiarism

Plagiarism and copying of copyright materials are serious offences and may lead to disciplinary actions. You should read the chapters on "Plagiarism" and "Copyright" in the Undergraduate/Postgraduate Handbook for details. You are strongly advised to read the booklet entitled "What is Plagiarism?" which was distributed to you upon your admission into the University, a copy of which can be found at www.hku.hk/plagiarism. A booklet entitled "Plagiarism and How to Avoid it" is also available from the Main Library.

15. Additional Course Information

1. Grading of Weekly Group Assignments

Attendance and weekly assignments form the basis for learning the skills and materials for the class. All weekly assignments will be assessed on a group basis. The primary goal of classroom participation and weekly group assignments is to help students learn by ensuring that everyone is prepared for class and thinking critically about the material. As such, grading for weekly assignments will be focused on effort. Getting a check on the weekly group assignment is the equivalent to receiving full credit (100). Effort alone is enough to earn a check for weekly assignments. Inadequate weekly group assignments, where effort is deemed lacking, will get a check minus (50). Assignments not turned in on time receive a zero.

2. Grading of Mid-Term and Final Assignments

The mid-term assignment and the take-home exam will be graded based on quality of analyses, accuracy of calculations, written expression and demonstrated familiarity with the subject matter. No extension will be granted for late assignments, which will receive a zero. A student must participate in weekly group assignments, the mid-term group assignment Q&A session, and final take home examination to receive an overall course assessment.

3. Non-graded Activities

Tutorial sessions will be offered to groups that require more feedback on their weekly assignments and mid-term case study. Industry practitioners may be available to meet with interested students to discuss pertinent topics in the course. On-site tours of financial market participants during office hours (e.g., underwriters and hedge funds crucial to the pricing of Initial Public Offerings) will also be organized based upon student interest. Participation in the tours is not required for the course and will not be graded, and are offered purely for the benefit of interested students.