NORTH PARK UNIVERSITY
School of Business and Non-Profit Management

Class #: SBNM 5311	**Fall Quad B 2012**
Course Title: Financial Decision Making	**Online**

Instructor:

Name: Pam Schilling
Office Phone: (773) 244-5505
Office Fax: (312) 264-0484
Email: pschilling@northpark.edu
Office Location: 5043 N. Spaulding, 2nd Floor (East of the bridge over the river)
Office Hours: Mondays, 10am-12:30pm, 1:00pm-3:30pm (all Central Time) and by appointment
Online Hours: Generally, 9am-11am and 9pm-11pm most weekdays

Required Texts

Financial Decision Making, Coursepack, SBNM 5311. Professor Pam Schilling, M.B.A., School of Business and Nonprofit Management, North Park University. ISBN 978-1-12-161575-5

Higgins, Robert C., Analysis for Financial Management, Tenth Edition, McGraw Hill. ISBN 978-0-07-803468-8

Course Description:

This course builds upon the core finance concepts and decision-making tools needed for the practice of financial management, and uses the knowledge gained in SBNM 5310: Managerial Finance as a foundation. Students will further develop skills necessary to evaluate corporate performance and investment alternatives through both strategic and financial analysis. The course does rely on quantitative analysis, but emphasis will be placed on the interpretation and incorporation in decision-making. Throughout the course, discussion and assessment will deal with ethical considerations within business contexts.

Course Objectives

During this course, the student will:

1. Apply factual knowledge related to finance (terminology, classifications, methods, trends)
2. Examine fundamental principles, generalizations, theories, or techniques related to management of existing financial resources and the acquisition of management of new resources
3. Explore the role of ethical behavior into implications for financial markets and financial management
4. Formulate financial analysis via discussion forums, homework, case studies and final project
5. Assess financial decisions and provide conclusions and actions that should be taken, driving sound financial management.

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Course Overview

Week	Date From To	Topics and Readings Chapter: Title	Assignments / Deliverables
0	Prior to Oct 22	***Course Preparation*** • Moodle and Syllabus Walkthrough • Discussion Forums • Case Studies (CS) • Financial Decision Project (FDP)	**SBNM 5311 Pre-work Checklist**
1	Oct 22 to Oct 28	***Assessing the Financial Health of the Firm: Interpreting and Evaluating Financial Statements*** • Higgins, Ch 1-2 (Optional) • Ethics in Finance • Ben & Jerry's Homemade (Case Study) • Assessing a Firm's Future Financial Health	**Self-Study Problems (Optional)** **Discussion Forum** **FDP – Deliverable 1** **CS - Assessing a Firm's Future Financial Health**
2	Oct 29 to Nov 4	***Planning Future Financial Performance: Financial Forecasting and Managing Growth*** • Higgins, Ch 3-4 (Optional) • The Thoughtful Forecaster • Krispy Kreme Doughnuts, Inc. (Case Study) • The Body Shop International PLC 2001 (Case Study)	**Discussion Forum** **FDP – Deliverable 2** **CS - The Body Shop International PLC 2001**
3	Nov 5 to Nov 11	***Financing Operations: Financial Instruments and Markets*** • Higgins, Ch 5 (Optional) • Butler Lumber (Case Study)	**Discussion Forum** **FDP – Deliverable 3** **CS - Butler Lumber**
4	Nov 12 to Nov 18	***Financing Operations: The Financing Decision*** • Higgins, Ch 6 (Optional) • Structuring Corporate Finance Policy • Hospital Corporation of America (A) (Case Study)	**Discussion Forum** **FDP – Deliverable 4** **CS - Hospital Corporation of America (A)**
Thanksgiving Break – No Assignments			
5	Nov 26 to Dec 2	***Evaluating Investment Opportunities: Discounted Cash Flow Techniques*** • Higgins, Ch 7 (Optional) • The Investment Detective (Optional) • Excel Functions Tutorial • Sheetbend & Halyard (Case Study)	**Discussion Forum** **Homework Problem: Ch 7, Q12** **FDP – Deliverable 5** **CS – Sheetbend & Halyard**
6	Dec 3 to Dec 9	***Evaluating Investment Opportunities: Risk Analysis in Investment Decisions*** • Higgins, Ch 8 (Optional) • Star River Electronics (Case Study)	**Self-Study Problems (Optional)** **Discussion Forum** **FDP – Deliverable 6** **CS - Star River Electronics**
7	Dec 10 to Dec 16	***Evaluating Investment Opportunities: Business Valuation and Corporate Restructuring*** • Higgins, Ch 9 (Optional) • Review (Optional): Rubric for the Financial Decision Project	**Self-Study Problems (Optional)** **Discussion Forum** **FDP – Final**

Reference Moodle for additional assignment details, instructions, deadlines and to upload/post all assignments.

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Course Grading

Assignment Point Allocation

Deliverable	***Points***
Discussion Forum (50 points / 7 weeks)	350
Case Studies (50 points / 6 cases)	300
Financial Decision Project	250
Deliverables 1-6 – Pass/Fail (All assignments must Pass)	
Final	
Overall	***900***

Overall Course Grade

At the completion of this course, you will receive a letter grade reflecting your performance in this course. Letter grades (from A – F) will be awarded according to the existing policies of the School of Business and Nonprofit Management. The final course grade will be computed according to the total number of points earned for all assignments as shown below:

Final Grade	% Low	% High	Low Pts	High Pts
A	94.0%	100.0%	846.0	900.0
A-	90.0%	93.9%	810.0	845.1
B+	87.0%	89.9%	783.0	809.1
B	84.0%	86.9%	756.0	782.1
B-	80.0%	83.9%	720.0	755.1
C+	77.0%	79.9%	693.0	719.1
C	74.0%	76.9%	666.0	692.1
C-	70.0%	73.9%	630.0	665.1
D+	67.0%	69.9%	603.0	629.1
D	64.0%	66.9%	576.0	602.1
D-	60.0%	63.9%	540.0	575.1
F	0.0%	59.9%	-	539.1

I do not accept late submissions of any assignments for any reason whatsoever.
A late submission will be recorded as 0 points.
All grades are final and not subject to debate.

The detailed components of your grade will always be posted to Moodle. It is your responsibility to audit regularly for accuracy and to request any required corrections. Final grades will be made available within a week upon the completion of the course and are found in Moodle and WebAdvisor.

Assignments – Deadlines

- PLEASE READ THE SYLLABUS AND ONLINE INFORMATION THROUGHTLY TO ENSURE DUE DATES ARE CLEAR.
- **No late assignments will be accepted.**
- High level assignment due dates and times:

Assignment	Due Date	Time Due (Central Time)
Discussion Forum	Original Post: Thurs Response Post: Mon	Original: 9pm Response: 9am
Financial Decision Project	Sun	noon
Case Studies	Mon	9am

Assignments – Overview / Instructions

In addition to the overview of assignments below, instructions and a grading rubric are posted on Moodle. Please reference each week and for each assignment.

Discussion Forum

Weekly Points	50
Total Points	350

- The Discussion Forum is used in place of in-class discussion in the online format. Please keep this in mind as your posts should be robust and thorough, as would be comments/answers made in a face-to-face class.
- Each week, a specific number of original and response posts are defined, along with the discussion topics. Based on the rubric, points are allocated to these posts.
- For an Original post, your discussion should be "substantive" – this means several sentences or perhaps paragraphs, depending on the particular question posed. It is also important to reference the text(s) for the course, the underlying finance theory behind the discussion question topic, and/or any facts that support your points.
- For a Response post, your comments should extend the original discussion. This can be done by relating to a personal experience, summarizing the original post from another perspective, offering additional information or resources (e.g., a related article you found), ties to other course material/information, etc.

  What a response post is NOT:

  - A question posed to an original post (only)
  - An answer to a question posted by another class member
  - A second post to clarify an original post

  These are all valuable contributions to the discussion forum conversation, but, are incremental to the assignment requirements.
- Additional posts beyond requirements – I highly encourage this as it creates a more robust discussion environment and everyone benefits from the learning experience. Also, incremental discussion forum activity is taken into consideration when grades are on a tier and may push you to the next grade level.

Case Study

Weekly Points	50
Total Points	300

- Case Studies are a valuable learning experience for graduate business education. This is an opportunity to apply theory to real world experiences and understand the more complex nuances of how business decisions are made. Also, case studies are intended to help develop your written communication/presentation skills, which are essential in business today.
- Case Studies are a critical component of this course. They are selected to cover the specific topics, and also, touch upon topics from other disciplines as financial management is usually connected to other business issues.
- Case studies are not perfectly clear, nor do they have one specific answer. They are intended to allow you to reference the relevant theories and think through the analysis and decision making for the business situation being presented. Case studies are NOT like homework – it is often difficult to just sit down, read the material, and work the questions. There is more involved.
- In Moodle, in the Week 0 – Pre-work folder, tips for preparing the Case Study write-up have been provided. Please review this thoroughly.
- General requirements:
  - Each case study write-up is due Monday, 9am.
  - Your write-up should specifically address the presented questions for the case, and include the relevant, supporting analysis.
  - The final write-up should be submitted in the form of a memo.
  - There are 5 categories of evaluation of your case study – please reference the Grading Rubric to review these.
- During the week, as you are reviewing the case study and working through the questions, if you have questions, ASK! You may post a question to the relevant question forum in Moodle or you may contact the Instructor. If you have a question, it is likely others do as well – so, the whole class benefits. Also, your learning experience will be better if you address the question early, rather than submitting an assignment that receives a poor grade and gets the feedback after the assignment is completed.

Financial Decision Project

Weekly Points	Pass/Fail
Total Points	250

- This is a TEAM project – teams of 3-4 will be created by the start of class in Week 1 (teams can self-select or the Instructor will create teams – an announcement will be posted in Moodle with these instructions).
- This is a project that simulates what it is like to not only build a business (from scratch), but, to work through the various decisions that are necessary to move such a project forward.
- This is also an opportunity to be creative in thinking about a business and connecting creativity/innovation to business theory and financial management.
- Detailed instructions for this project are posted in Moodle.

- During each week of the course, a component of the Financial Decision Project will be built and the final deliverable is a comprehensive summary with a decision – topics cover: Overall business focus, products and marketing, operations, and the financial analysis to evaluate the business and transaction decision.
- Interim deliverables (1-6): Each week, a topic for the Financial Decision Project is posted. You will work with your team to 1) Discuss the topic, 2) Perform any necessary analysis or research, 3) Create your perspective on the topic, and 4) Prepare an 3-5 page write-up to submit for that topic.

  Interim deliverable grading/review/feedback:

  - The 6 interim deliverables will receive a grade of Pass or Fail. All interim deliverables must be awarded a Pass in order for the final deliverable to receive an overall grade.
  - Grading will constitute of feedback and constructive points which should be incorporated into the final deliverable. Written comments will be provided and teams are welcome to arrange a conference call to discuss any feedback directly.
  - Interim deliverables which receive a grade of "Fail" must be resubmitted within two weeks (e.g., two weeks are allowed to update/revise).
- Final deliverable: The grading rubric defines the assessment elements of the final deliverable. This is a powerpoint presentation of the overall business, a review of the business elements, a summary of the financial analysis, and an overall recommendation for the business transaction decision.
- This project has no right answers. Being creative adds to the learning experience of this project. The overall focus should be getting to a decision based on the financial measurements of the business and transaction – keep that focus in mind.

Course Teaching and Learning Methods

This course is being taught in intensive online format; therefore, it is very important for students to keep up with readings, assignments, and online discussions. There are a number of requirements each week and it is each student's responsibility to ensure the assignments, requirements, and deadlines are understood.

The learning process in the online environment is not solely instructor-led. Students must create learning opportunities with one another. We are all instructors, students, and supporters in this learning environment.

The course uses individual and group assignments. It will be necessary to do group work and do so in our virtual environment, working by phone, Skype, and email. This is very typical in business settings today, particularly global organizations that are geographically distributed. Pay attention to this and raise your level of communication with your classmates to ensure that you get the most from this learning environment and the course's assignments.

A key item for success in this course: If you have questions – ASK!!! The instructor can arrange individual or group discussions to clarify topics or assignments, post information, and adjust the overall management of the course. But, if students do not convey this need, it is not known. Two online forums have also been provided for questions.

Learning is best facilitated when we work together – do not work persistently on assignments where you are confused or not making progress. Ask a class member or instructor for guidance and help (per the guidelines established above with the overview of assignments).

Overall Expectations

1. It is important to complete all readings, post assignments on-time, and participate in the Discussion Forums each week.
2. If you encounter a problem with an assignment, ask questions. It is preferred that you post questions in the appropriate discussion forum that has been set up for that purpose. You may however contact the instructor with your question and you will receive a private response.

Participant Responsibilities

1. Engagement and full participation are required for this class. You cannot successfully complete this online course without completing the weekly readings and assignments. You are expected to read the text as assigned and complete the assigned problems based on the assigned deadlines.
2. Some assignments will be posted on-line for others to see. You will be asked to comment and provide feedback to one another on your work.
3. Although I strongly suggest that all issues, questions, and problems be dealt with online, you can feel free to call or e-mail me regarding these issues at any time, noting the office hours I am available.
4. Use proper "netiquette" (see A Guide to Netiquette in Course Information book on Moodle).
5. I normally advise participants to plan on spending 10-15 hours per week on course responsibilities (e.g. reading, assignments, Discussion Forums, case study analysis, paper research/analysis, etc.).

Course Facilitator (Instructor) Responsibilities

1. The course facilitator will design the course and learning modules in such a way that students have every opportunity to achieve the learning objectives.
2. The course facilitator will provide reactions to student responses and discussion as appropriate in order to clarify important ideas and concepts.
3. The course facilitator will provide opportunities for group work that will include discussion as well as hands-on exercises.
4. The course facilitator will provide updated information on relevant resources for the various topics of interest.
5. The course facilitator will read and critically assess students' assignments and provide feedback within 3-5 days of receipt.
6. The course facilitator will respond to all student e-mails within 48 hours of receipt.
7. The course facilitator will respond to all student phone calls within 48 hours.

Communication Expectations

Communication skills are a major part of your academic and professional development. As this course is in the School of Business and Nonprofit Management, we will assume that I am an executive and you are an employee on my team. Therefore, every communication you send should be highly professional. This means formatted and edited for 100% accuracy in spelling, grammar, punctuation, and word choice. Your question or inquiry should be specific and clear. I will be able to respond more promptly if this is the case.

Also, I will not respond to any email that is not accurate or does not have a clear request. I check email regularly and late into the evening. If I do not respond within one business day, please apply proper diligence and follow-up, and resend your communication (assume that I've overlooked your message in error).

When authoring an email, please use an appropriate subject which is indicative of the contents of the message. For example: "Clarification question – Case 1." Your primary point of reference is this syllabus. Please review in detail before approaching me with questions about the course structure and content contained in this syllabus. Do not be surprised if I refer you to the syllabus or Moodle as an answer.

My preference for contacting me is as follows:

1. Email (at any time)
2. Office hours / Appointment to speak via telephone/Skype – arrange via email
3. Voicemail message (recognize I am seldom in my office and check messages infrequently)

Technology Tools Expectations

Understanding technology tools in today's business environment is critical. As such, I require all work be done in Microsoft Word, Excel, or Powerpoint (or equivalent) and specify the appropriate tool for each assignment.

Computer Requirements: In order to effectively participate in and successfully complete this course, each participant will need to have access to a computer and a high-speed internet connection. Please visit http://www.northpark.edu/Campus-Life-and-Services/Computer-Services/Network/Minimum-Requirements for information on computer requirements and network access.

Moodle: All students are expected to access Moodle. All grades and critical directions for assignments are posted on Moodle. This is also the official record for all grade-related issues. Check and audit grades regularly.

Email: All students are expected to check your North Park emails regularly (NOTE: Outside accounts like Yahoo and Hotmail often forwards class emails to your spam folder). I send significant information via email and expect all students to have read the information sent. If you do not use your North Park email address, please make sure email is being forwarded properly.

Software Tools: All students are expected to use the appropriate software for the course. This course relies heavily on Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel, use of the internet, and many online research resources.

Policy on Ethics

PLEASE READ THIS SECTION THOROUGHLY

In keeping with our Christian heritage and commitment, North Park University (NPU) and the SBNM are committed to the highest possible ethical and moral standards. Just as we will constantly strive to live up to these high standards, we expect our students to do the same. To that end, cheating of any sort will not be tolerated. Students who are discovered cheating are subject to discipline up to and including failure of a course and expulsion.

Our definition of cheating includes but is not limited to:

- Plagiarism – the use of another's work as one's own without giving credit to the individual. This includes using materials from the Internet.
- Copying another's answers on an examination.
- Deliberately allowing another to copy one's answers or work.
- Signing an attendance roster for another who is not present.

In the special instance of group work, the instructor will make clear his/her expectations with respect to individual vs. collaborative work. A violation of these expectations may be considered cheating as well. For further information on this subject you may refer to the Academic Dishonesty section of the University's Catalog (available at www.northpark.edu). In conclusion, it is North Park's mission to prepare you for a life of significance and service. Honesty and ethical behavior are the foundation upon which such lives are built. We therefore expect the highest standards of each student in this regard.

Student with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who believe that they may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to contact the SBNM program office (773-244-6270). Please do so as soon as possible to better ensure that such accommodations are implemented in a timely manner. For further information please review the following website: http://www.northpark.edu/ada.

Use of APA Publication Manual

The School of Business and Nonprofit Management (SBNM) has adopted the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA) as the standard and required format for all written assignments in SBNM courses.

Our goal in adopting the APA Manual is to enhance student learning by:

1. Improving student's writing skills.
2. Standardizing the required format of all written assignments in all SBNM courses.
3. Emphasizing the importance of paper mechanics, grammatical constructs, and the necessity of proper citations.
4. Holding students accountable for high quality written work.

If you are unfamiliar with the requirements of the APA Publication Manual, we recommend that you purchase the reference manual and/or that you consult one or more of the suggested resources as listed on the Student Resources section of the SBNM website. ***It is your responsibility to learn and ensure that all written work is formatted according to the standards of the APA Manual.***

In conclusion, it is our mission to prepare each student for a life of significance and service. Honesty and ethical behavior are the foundation upon which such lives are built. We therefore expect the highest standards of each student in this regard.