Asset Management
(B7323-001 -- Fall 2015)

Professor: Geert Bekaert
Office: Uris, Room 411
Classroom: Warren 207
E-mail: gb241@columbia.edu (preferred means of communication)
Office Hours: by appointment
Teaching Assistant: Nancy Ran Xu (rxu17@gsb.columbia.edu)

Practical Details:
Class times: See schedule on Canvas and outline below.
Prerequisites: Students must have taken or exempted from B6301 Corporate Finance. Students must have taken or exempted from B6302 Capital Markets and Investments or take it as a co requisite.
TAs: The TA will hold a review session on basic statistical and finance concepts; he will also hold a few review sessions regarding the class material/testbank questions. Finally, he will also help with potential problems with the mean-variance optimization software I use for the class.

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND COURSE OBJECTIVE:

The course provides students with a fundamental understanding of the principles and analytics of asset management as applied to both institutional and private clients. This course will be of great interest to anyone aspiring to a career in asset, portfolio, private wealth, endowment, or pension fund management. A fundamental understanding of the issues in asset management, whether institutional or private, will also be helpful in other areas of finance such as investment banking, insurance, accounting and personal finance. In addition, students will learn how to better manage their future personal wealth.

All investors face three main problems, which will be covered to varying degrees in the course:

1. Asset Allocation – How do investors decide on the level of capital to allocate to individual asset classes?
   - Strategic asset allocation of pension funds/endowments
   - Global asset allocation (Quantitative asset management)
   - Individual's asset allocation
2. Implementation issues-How to implement the asset allocation?
   - Portfolio Manager Selection: Asset owners usually delegate management of their portfolios to financial intermediaries, which may invest across a broad array of assets or specialize in a certain investment style or asset class.
   - Investment Vehicles – passive versus active management, mutual funds, ETFs, hedge funds and private equity.
3. Performance Measurement – How do investors determine how well money managers have performed?
The course will include finance theory, statistical analysis and basic optimization theory, mirroring the investment management industry’s increased reliance on quantitative methods. The class will attempt to bring students to the frontier of best practice, but also introduce new relevant concepts from academic research. In addition, throughout the class I will point out puzzling behaviors or empirical facts, motivating why they are puzzling, and outlining the most recent academic thinking regarding these puzzles.

The organization of the class is roughly as follows:

I. Institutional Asset Allocation

This section starts by reviewing modern portfolio theory and applying it to the problem of strategic asset allocation (relevant for pension funds or endowments). We then discuss the state-of-the art techniques used by quantitative asset managers, including the Black-Litterman model developed at Goldman Sachs. Globalization is a major trend affecting the asset management industry and we devote special attention to the international diversification of portfolios and the problem of global asset allocation. We also use international data to illustrate the quantitative tools employed in the industry. The final class in this segment examines emerging markets and how the globalization process has affected asset prices.

II. Performance Measurement and Investment Vehicles

We cover standard performance measures such as Sharpe ratios, Treynor measures, Jensen’s alpha and information ratios. These measures were mostly developed for standard long only portfolios, such as those offered by mutual funds. Mutual funds run both portfolios for both individuals and institutions but we will cover the mutual fund industry from the perspective of individual investors. We also analyze the state-of-the-art and popular technique of style analysis and apply it to the performance of the legendary Magellan Fund. We also discuss performance evaluation techniques for hedge funds. We use a case on active currency managers to discuss the emergence of a new asset class, performance measurement for active managers using technical analysis, and the value of an asset management business. The hedge fund industry is discussed more generally as well. We also devote a class to private equity using an outside speaker to cover most material.

III. Asset Management for Individuals

With the increasing importance of defined contribution plans, the responsibility of asset allocation has shifted to the individual. Financial planning for individuals has been revolutionized recently as more and more sophisticated advice has become available. We discuss special issues regarding individual asset allocation, including alternative preferences, life cycle investing, human capital, dynamic investing, taxes and retirement planning. We also discuss Private Wealth Management, the asset management for the very rich. Although Private Wealth Management relies on the concepts and analytics of institutional asset management, it has developed as a field of research and practice that is distinctly separate from portfolio management and institutional asset allocation. The challenges introduced by the need for tax efficiency, including issues relative to wealth
transfer, as well as psychological and behavioral issues differentiate the practice of Private Wealth Management. An experienced practitioner will present to the class as the instructor has no special expertise in this area.

**CONNECTION WITH THE CORE:**
The class will utilize build on, and extend concepts covered in the following core courses:

**Corporate Finance:**
- Efficient markets
- Risk
- The CAPM

**Managerial Finance:**
- Statistics data analysis (means, correlations,…)
- Normal distribution
- Linear regressions

**Global Economic Environment**
- Material on exchange rates
- Interest rates and inflation

The course builds heavily on and deepens much of the material covered in Capital Markets.

**COURSE MATERIALS:**
- Class notes, Case materials (to be made available through Canvas);
- **Course Readings**, online set of readings, cases.
- Some chapters in Bodie, Kane and Marcus, (Irwin McGraw Hill), the text for Capital Markets (B6302), should prove useful for a better comprehension of investment analytics.
- Recommended books:
  - The Intelligent Portfolio by Christopher L. Jones. This book will be a nice complement to a number of classes and provides a free try – out of the Financial Engines financial advice product.
  - International and Financial Management by Geert Bekaert and Robert Hodrick; some classes built heavily on some chapters in the book.
METHOD OF EVALUATION/COMPONENTS OF THE GRADE
Most assignments for this class will be conducted within groups of 3 to 5 people. The
groups are to be the same for all cases / assignments and the group members will rate
each other’s contribution at the end to avoid free riding. The groups should be formed
as soon as possible, preferably in the first week.

1) Case Write Ups (45%)
There will be 7 Cases. This could be a genuine Harvard case (for example the Harvard
Management Company case) or it could be a mini-case or exercise written by the
instructor (for example the G7 Global Asset Allocation Case). Each case is
accompanied by a set of questions that have to be answered in a formal document,
written by the group. This document must be handed in at the beginning of the class in
which the case is discussed. Because the class notes contain the case solution, no late
assignments are accepted. The Cases and due dates are clearly listed on Canvas. The
Syllabus below has a preliminary schedule, but please, check Canvas regularly for
updates.

The total grade for the group will be based on the best five cases; the worst cases will
not count towards your grade. That means that each group can elect to not submit two
cases. Nevertheless, learning will be maximized when groups prepare the cases
thoroughly on a consistent basis.

All class write-ups are Type A!

2) Class Participation and Attendance (15%)

Class participation is an important part of your grade. You will be graded on attendance,
thoughtful participation in class, and overall contribution to the learning of your peers.
I will punish students who do not attend: missing more than two sessions (which
amounts to 25% of the classes) will lead to an incomplete grade for the class.

Successful participation also includes:
- Being on time when class starts (including respecting the amount of time allocated to
  the break)
- When guest speakers are present, being particularly respectful and prepared with
  thoughtful questions.
- Not using of electronic devices, in particular, phones during class time. Laptops may
  be used for taking notes but nothing else, unless instructed.

Please refrain from using electronic devices in class: laptops can be used for taking
notes, not for surfing the Internet. I will be particularly sensitive to the rules above for
sessions with outside speakers. Please show them the respect they deserve.
3) **Final Quiz (40%)**

The Quiz will be organized as a take home exam, likely in the week after the last class. It will be an open-book, written exam, which will primarily test your knowledge of the concepts taught in class. The exam should at most take two hours to complete. If you attend class and do the work, it should be rather straightforward to pass with flying colors. As a practical matter, you will be able to download the quiz from Canvas, and will have to return the completed exam within two hours. You can take the exam whenever you want to within the time frame specified (which will be at least one week).

Finally, I have prepared a number of questions (a “testbank”) designed to help you prepare for the final exam. You can solve these questions on your own but the TA will hold a review session based on the testbank material.

**PRELIMINARY OUTLINE:**

(12 sessions of 3 hours)

The outline is highly preliminary and subject to change. In particular, speakers are, for now, taken from a previous class installment. The speaker list will be finalized before class. Readings will be added as we go on and the outline will be updated on Canvas. Classes denoted with an asterisk are likely to be “equation-intensive,” extra caffeine dosage highly recommended. Readings marked as “Background materials” are not required reading.
Session 1 (Sept. 11, 12:30 – 3:30pm)
Introduction to Asset Management

The Asset Management Industry
Introduction to Wealth Management
Review of Concepts/Techniques of Modern Portfolio Management
Review of Mean Variance Optimization (with Matrix Algebra), using the Harvard Management Case as an illustration*
Introduction to Strategic Asset Allocation

Materials:
- Class Notes

Background Material:
- Bodie, Kane, Marcus (9th Edition), Chapters 5, 6, 7
- Jones, Chapters 1, 5

Session 2 (Sept. 12, 8:30am – 11:30am)
Concepts and Techniques
The Case for International Diversification

The "Case for International Diversification" and introduction to the G7 Case
Puzzle: Home Bias

Materials:
- READ BUT DO NOT SOLVE THE HARVARD MANAGEMENT CASE
- Class Notes

Background Material:
- Bodie, Kane, Marcus (9th Edition), Chapters 5, 6, 7
- Jones, Chapters 1, 5
- Bekaert-Hodrick textbook Chapter 13 on International Capital Market Equilibrium, Section 13.3


Session 3 (Sept. 25, 12:30pm – 3:30pm)
Strategic Asset Allocation

Strategic Asset Allocation at HMC
TIPS
Capital Market Assumptions Equities/Bonds
Endowments versus Pension Funds
Puzzle: The Fed Model
Materials:
- WRITE UP THE HARVARD MANAGEMENT CASE DUE
- Class Notes
- Harvard Case 9-201-053: The Harvard Management Company and Inflation-Protected Bonds

Background Material:
- Bodie, Kane, Marcus (9th Edition), Chapters 6, 7
- Jones, Chapters 2, 8

Session 4 (Sept. 26, 3:45pm – 6:45pm)
Global Asset Allocation and the Black-Litterman Model

The G7 Case
Review of CAPM*
Revisiting Home Bias
The Black-Litterman Approach to Asset Allocation (Introduction)*

Materials:
- WRITE UP G7 CASE DUE
- Class Notes
- Bekaert-Hodrick textbook Chapter 13 on International Capital Market Equilibrium, Sections 13.4 and 13.5

Background Material:
- Bodie, Kane, Marcus (9th Edition), Chapter 9
- Jones, Chapter 4

Session 5 (Oct. 9, 8:30am – 11:30am)

The Black-Litterman Model*
Revisiting the HMC Case*
Currency Markets: Introduction* (Prepping the Currency Management Case)

Materials:
- Read but do not submit G7 Case II

Background Material:
- Bodie, Kane, Marcus (9th Edition), Chapter 8
- Chapters 2, 3, and 6 in Bekaert-Hodrick Textbook
Session 6 (Oct. 23, 3:45pm – 6:45pm)
Performance Measurement
Hedge Funds

Standard Performance Measures
Style Analysis*

Speaker: The Hedge Fund Industry, Ben Appen, CFA - founding partner, Magnitude Capital (Magnitude Capital is a 2 Billion Dollar fund of funds) [Confirmed]

Materials:
- Class Notes

Background Material:
- Bodie, Kane, Marcus, Chapters 4 (Mutual Funds), 24 (Performance Measurement), 26 (Hedge Funds)

Session 7 (Oct. 24, 12:30pm – 3:30pm)
Currencies and Hedge Funds

Active Currency Management/Hedge Funds
Technical Analysis
Currencies as an Asset Class
Puzzle: The Carry Premium
Commodities vs. Currencies

Material:
- WRITE UP ON ACTIVE CURRENCY MANAGEMENT CASE DUE
- Nielsen, Bo. “Taylor Rules Currencies, Not to be Confused With the Other Guy,” [www.bloomberg.com](http://www.bloomberg.com) 2008

Background Material
- Bodie, Kane, Marcus, Chapters 24
- Jones, Chapters 3, 5, 7, 9-11
- Bekaert-Hodrick textbook, Chapters 7,10
Session 8 (Nov. 6, 12:30pm – 3:30pm)
Personal Wealth Management

Speaker on PWM Industry; Ann Kaplan, Circle Financial Management (former partner Goldman Sachs, Board of Trustees Columbia) [very likely]

Session 9 (Nov. 21, 3:45pm – 6:45pm)
Emerging Markets

Emerging Markets and Asset Allocation
Globalization and Asset Prices

Material:
- WRITE UP ON EMERGING MARKETS CASE DUE
- Class Notes

Background Material:
- Bekaert-Hodrick textbook, Chapter 12

Session 10 (Dec. 4, 8:30am – 11:30am)
Quantitative Asset Management

Speaker: Michael Urias, Hutchin Hill, Multi-Strategy Fund, Long-Short Equity Manager

Review Class (Testbank Questions)

Session 11 (Dec. 5, 8:30am – 11:30am)
Idiosyncratic Risk
Introduction to Asset Management for Individuals

Measuring Idiosyncratic Risk
Quantifying the Cost of the Idiosyncratic Risk
Company Stock and Asset Allocation
Puzzle: Under-diversification
Special review: Style Analysis (see Performance Measures notes); preparation Magellan Case

Materials:
- WRITE UP ON IDIOSYNCRATIC RISK CASE DUE
- Class Notes
- The BP-Amoco Case (Idiosyncratic Risk)
- Harvard Case 9-201-052: The Harmonized Savings Plan at BP Amoco

Background Material:
- Jones, Chapter 6

(Tentative) Review Session during Lunch Time; on Dec. 5
Session 12 (Dec. 12, 3:45pm – 6:45pm)
Revisiting market efficiency
Introduction to Mutual Fund Industry
Mutual Funds and Performance Measurement
Individual Asset Allocation/ Retirement planning

The Magellan Case
Puzzle: Why are there so many active funds?
ETFs
The Stock Market non-participation puzzle
Individual Portfolio Management
The Annuity puzzle
Rev up your Financial Engines

Materials:
- WRITE UP ON THE MAGELLAN CASE DUE
- Class Notes

Background Material:
- Jones, Chapters 3, 5, 7, 9-11
- Bodie, Kane, Marcus, Chapters 4, 5, 11, 24

Final Quiz: Take Home!