

FINC 671_Special Topics in Finance Radford University Davis College of Business and Economics

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Course Objective

This course exposes students to various new financial applications that they can apply in their personal life and professional career. In this course, I plan to introduce students to the new developments in financial services and investments.

This course covers a variety of topics that are not only innovative, but also have wide ranging applications. The course covers three main topics: Blockchain Technology, Cryptocurrencies in general and Bitcoin in particular, and Crowdfunding.

The course provides the student a variety of tools to understand the mechanics and applications of Blockchain technology, Crowdfunding as a source of financing and dynamics of Cryptocurrencies. In addition to new innovative topics, I will include some of the finance topics that have been in place for quite some time, but they have changed the financial transactions & services in a very meaningful way. Those topics include securitization, use of derivatives, and mutual funds.

The teaching will alternate between lectures and case discussion. Cases both from the real world as well as from academic setting will be discussed to explore innovations in finance. There will be a few calculations, however, I will try to limit the use of calculations in this course and focus more on the applications of these interesting & innovative techniques.

Specifically, I will be including the following areas:

1. *Blockchain Technology*

- Basics of Blockchain Technology.
- Applications and Future of Blockchain technology.
- How Blockchain can be used to lower barriers to entry and create new & vibrant eco-system.

2. *Cryptocurrencies*

- Bitcoin: What is a bitcoin, how one can earn returns on it, how can it be used as a substitute of a currency, what could be the potential issues of its use in the future.
- What are cryptocurrencies, mechanism to value crypto assets, and ICOs.
- Basics of crypto mining, trading, and exchange platforms.

3. *Crowdfunding*

- Crowd Funding: What it is, how it is different from others, and what it can be used for.
- Why crowdfunding is better and efficient way to raise money.
- Why to use one platform over the other, why to use one form of crowdfunding over others.
- How Crowdfunding differs from angel investors and venture capitalists.

4. *Securitization, Mutual Funds, Derivatives, and Other Fixed Income Financial Products*

- What is securitization and how it can be applied by financial institutions.
- Concept of mutual funds and ETFs and how they simplify the process of investments.

- ~~Use of Options/Futures/Swaps by individuals and financial institutions in decision making process.~~
- ~~TIPs, STRIPs, and other fixed income products and their applications.~~

Since this course will be taught primarily using distance learning method; therefore, it is important that students are maintaining pace with the weekly schedule. It is very important that students are maintaining sincerity of purpose in completing the relevant chapters, HWs, Quizzes and Exams in a timely manner.

Learning Outcomes After

completing the course, students should be able to:

- Understand the basics of Blockchain technology and how this technology can be applied to different businesses.
- Evaluate the role of Blockchain in transforming financial services and the challenges for incorporating Blockchain into financial systems.
- Understand and estimate value of a cryptocurrency.
- Evaluate the role of Blockchain in cryptocurrencies.
- Understand the challenges and regulations faced by Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies.
- Evaluate initial Coin Offering, challenges and regulations concerning ICOs.
- Understand the concepts of Crowdfunding and able to evaluate different form of crowdfunding such as community crowdfunding, financial return crowdfunding, donation crowdfunding, reward crowdfunding, peer-to-peer landing, and equity crowdfunding.
- Evaluate procedures, costs, and benefits associated with different platforms that can be used for crowdfunding e.g. Indigogo, Kickstarter, and others.
- Understand the basics and applications of Securitization, Derivatives, Mutual Funds, and Selected Fixed Income Products.
- Understand the basic functions of innovation.

Course Materials

We will be using customized casebook published by McGraw-Hill for this course.

Title: Special Topics In Finance

ISBN# 978-1307551259 (create McGraw-Hill)

Special Accommodation

If you are seeking academic accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act at Radford University, you are required to register with the Center for Accessibility Services (CAS) [formerly known as Disability Resource Office (DRO)]. To receive academic accommodations for this class, please submit your documentation to the CAS 3rd Floor (Suites 301-327), Russell Hall (formerly DRO in the lower level of Tyler

Hall Suites 54-69), by fax to 540-831-6525, by email to cas@radford.edu (formerly dro@radford.edu). After submitting documentation to the office, you will set up an interview with a Disability Services Specialist to discuss accommodations. You will be notified via email once your accommodation package is complete and ready to be picked up. Once you have picked up your accommodation package, you will need to meet with each course professor during their office hours to review and discuss your package. For more information and/or for documentation guidelines, visit <http://www.radford.edu/content/cas/home.html> (formerly www.radford.edu/dro) or call 540-831-6350.

This course will make use of an online proctoring tool that requires you take one or more exams on a Windows or Mac computer equipped with a functional webcam, microphone and high-speed Internet connection. You will be required to display a photo ID to the camera to validate your identity before the exam begins. The Radford University RU Express photo id is the preferred form of identification. Any government-issued photo ID can be used as an alternate, but the Radford University RU Express card is recommended. The remainder of the exam session will be recorded and may be reviewed by a proctor and the instructor.

You are required to be in a private setting for your exam. The system will be recording video and audio of you and your surroundings throughout the exam. Prior to taking an exam, you should inform roommates, family members, potential visitors, etc., that the exam session and the surroundings will be recorded. You should ask others to leave the room while you are taking the exam. Any violations of the Standards of Student Conduct observed during the exam session and the course as a whole will be reported to the Student Standards and Conduct Office.

During the examination, you and your actions will be recorded via webcam. Video recordings will be stored on the vendors' systems, with access restricted to authorized personnel only. A review of such recordings will only be permitted for authorized vendor personnel and any party authorized by the University, including the Student Standards and Conduct Office.

Respondus Monitor Specific Support

There are no fees associated with using Respondus Monitor to take an online exam. Students will be required to install the free Respondus Lockdown Browser application and are encouraged to test their equipment (a functional webcam, microphone and high-speed Internet connection) well in advance of any online quiz/exam to ensure their system is functioning appropriately. Please contact the Radford University Technology Assistance Center at 540-831-7500 or www.radford.edu/itonestop to help resolve any problems. ANY internet-capable devices in addition to the computer you are using to access the exam would NOT be allowed. The disallowed set of devices would thus include Smartphones used as calculators, iPads, additional desktop computers, etc.

Assessment

Students' progress will be measured by their performance on assignments and tests.

Exams 60%

There will be three exams. Each exam is worth 20 percent.

Assignments 40%.

Each assignment is equally weighted. At this point, I am not sure how many assignments will be given to students. For example, if 10 assignments are given to students then each assignment is worth = $40\%/10 = 4\%$. If 8 assignments are given then each assignment = $40\%/8 = 5\%$.

A final grade will be assigned according to the following schedule:

91%↑ – 100% = A
87%↑ - 91% = A- 83%↑
- 87% = B+
80%↑ - 83% = B
73%↑ - 80% = B-
70%↑ - 73% = C
≤70% = F

Important Notes

Other Class Policies:

1. **E-mail.** Students are required to check their email throughout the course as most of the information outside of the class will be delivered via email.
2. **Responsibilities.** Each student is responsible for keeping up with the class schedule, checking email, and checking the course web site on a daily basis.
3. Cheaters will be prosecuted to the fullest extent. Please note the following statement:

“A fundamental principle of academic, business, and community life is honesty. Violation of this ethical concept will result in penalties ranging from a grade of “F” in the course to dismissal from the university. In all penalties, a letter of fact will be included in the student’s file.”

4. You will be responsible for any material covered in class that is not in your text.
5. You are responsible for withdrawing from the class should you decide to do so.

Computer Related Issues

I randomly hear from students that “my computer crashed while I was doing the assignment” or “I accidentally close the webpage” or “my computer disabled during the assignment” etc. Please make sure that you have another computer ready in case something goes wrong with the computer you are working on or go to campus lab or public library to complete the assignments to avoid such issues. It is your responsibility to have other alternatives ready in case things go wrong with your computer.

Re-Grading

In line with Grading Guidelines for Radford University, the process of assigning of grades is intended be one of unbiased evaluation. This means that students are encouraged to respect the integrity and authority of the professor’s grading system and discouraged from pursuing arbitrary challenges to it.

If a student feels that an inadvertent error has been made in the grading of an individual assignment or in assessing an overall course grade, a request to have that the grade be re-evaluated may be submitted. Students

should submit such requests in writing to the professor within 7 days of receiving the grade, including a brief written statement of why he or she believes that an error in grading has been made.

Classroom Norms

- Arrive to class on time and stay to the end of the class period. Chronically arriving late or leaving class early is unprofessional and disruptive to the entire class. Repeated tardiness will have an impact on your grade.
- Turn off all electronic devices prior to the start of class. Laptops, cell phones and other electronic devices are a distraction to everyone.

General Behavior

The University expects that students will conduct themselves with respect and professionalism toward faculty, students, and others present in class and will follow the rules laid down by the instructor for classroom behavior. Students who fail to do so may be asked to leave the classroom.

Academic Integrity

Integrity is critical to the learning process and to all that we do here at Radford University. As members of our community, all students agree to abide by the Radford University Student Code of Conduct, which includes a commitment to:

- Exercise integrity in all aspects of one's academic work including, but not limited to, the preparation and completion of exams, papers and all other course requirements by not engaging in any method or means that provides an unfair advantage.
- Clearly acknowledge the work and efforts of others when submitting written work as one's own. Ideas, data, direct quotations (which should be designated with quotation marks), paraphrasing, creative expression, or any other incorporation of the work of others should be fully referenced.
- Refrain from behaving in ways that knowingly support, assist, or in any way attempt to enable another person to engage in any violation of the Code of Conduct. Our support also includes reporting any observed violations of this Code of Conduct or other School and University policies that are deemed to adversely affect the Radford University community.

Honor Code

You are responsible for maintaining Radford University honor code, which mandates zero tolerance for cheating.

Disclaimer: I reserve the right to alter the contents, requirements and/or scheduling of this course.