

Corporate Governance MGMT 625 Q2 2017

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Course description:

This seminar examines the relationships between corporate managers, the boards of directors charged with overseeing them, and investors. We'll review the responsibilities of the board, including financial statement approval, CEO performance assessment, executive compensation, and succession planning. While boards are legally bound to represent the interests of equity investors, in the course of carrying out this role they are often called on to respond to the needs of numerous other stakeholders, including customers, employees, government and society at large. With global brands at risk and mistakes instantly transmitted via Internet and social media, the reputational stakes are very high.

The course is a combination of lecture, guest lecture, discussion, case analysis, and in-class research workshops. We will review some of the theory underlying modern governance practice, drawing from theories and evidence provided by research across diverse fields, including finance, sociology, and organization and management theory. We'll study specific situations where boards and management teams faced governance challenges, and assess the strategies used to deal with them. Finally, we'll examine the ways in which governance arrangements and external stakeholder involvement in governance affects corporate social behavior and global citizenship.

Course Requirements:

Your thoughtful participation, via the following:

- Attendance and in-class participation (20%)
- Three short (2-4 pg.) research assignments (45%). Instructions for each research assignment are provided in the syllabus below. Research assignments must be posted to Canvas by 9:00 AM on the day that the corresponding class is held. Assignments turned in after 9:00 AM **will not receive credit**.
- A final group project (35% of class grade) – an 8-10 page double-spaced paper on a governance topic of your choice, due in our final class. These papers should be submitted via email to marymcd@wharton.upenn.edu. The final day of class will be reserved for selected groups to present your final projects to the class so that you may learn from one another and discuss each other's work. For your final project, you can critique the governance arrangements of a particular firm or country, or delve more deeply into any of the topics that we discuss over the course of the class, or explore any additional governance topics that we do not cover, but that you have an interest in learning more about. 25% of your course grade will come from your group's score on

- the final project and presentation. 10% of your course grade will come from your individual contribution to this final group project, as rated by your group members.
- Students who seek extra credit points to make up for class absences or low in-class participation can send in a real-world application, which entails finding an online newspaper or blog article about a firm that illustrates or expands upon a topic we discuss in class. Email the article to me along with a paragraph-length explanation of how the article illustrates or expands upon our class material. You may turn in more than one real-world application throughout the course for extra participation credit.

Reading

Assigned readings for the classes are drawn from cases, academic articles, newspaper articles, and business reviews. These are strongly related to that week's topic, and will often be summarized briefly in the lecture portion of class, or discussed as a group. I expect all participants to turn up to class having familiarized themselves with these readings and being ready to discuss them.

There is also one governance textbook assigned for the class –*Corporate Governance Matters* by Larcker and Tayan. This is intended to provide basic information and background on topics we may not have time to fully discuss in class. This reading should be considered *supplemental*, but at times may be very useful, particularly as you prepare for class sessions where you have little prior knowledge of the topic under discussion, or as you work on your final paper.

Finally, if time permits I suggest you read the recent book *Boards That Lead*, by Charan, Carey, and Useem. It is full of practical examples of real world challenges that boards face.

Introductory Session

Class 1, October 24, 2017 - Theoretical Roots of Governance: Who Should Govern a Company's Actions?

Readings:

- Michael Jensen, 2001, "Value Maximization, Stakeholder Theory, and the Objective Function."
- Donaldson & Preston, 1995: "The stakeholder theory of the corporation: Concepts, evidence and implications"

Textbook Reference:

Larcker/Tayan: Chapter 1 – Introduction to Corporate Governance

Topic 1: Governance from Inside the Boardroom

Class 2, October 26, 2017 – The Role of Directors

Readings:

- *The Economist*, “From Cuckolds to Captains: Corporate boards are playing a more prominent role in steering companies”
- Davidoff, “Despite Worries, Serving at the Top Carries Little Risk”

Textbook Reference:

- Larcker/Tayan: Chapter 3 - Board of Directors: Duties and Liability

In-class Research Lab: Finding the Fundamentals in US Corporate Governance

Class 3, October 31, 2017 – Board Demography: Who should serve on a Company’s Board?

Readings:

- “Women on Boards,” Lord Davies, Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2011. (Skim)
Available at: <http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/business-law/docs/w/11-745-women-on-boards.pdf>
- “Are current CEOs the best board members?” by David Larcker and Brian Tayan, Stanford GSB, August 2011.
Available at: <https://www.gsb.stanford.edu/faculty-research/publications/are-current-ceos-best-board-members>

Textbook Reference:

- Larcker/Tayan: Chapter 4 – Board of Directors: Selection, Compensation and Removal

Assignment 1: Choose a company that interests you and pull its proxy statements from 1994/95 (or the earliest year available) and 2014/15 (or the latest year available) using the SEC Edgar archival search for form DEF 14A. Examine the company’s slate of directors as described in each proxy. How have the company’s directors changed over this period? Some characteristics to consider include, for example, board size, the number of company employees on the board, the functional backgrounds or primary occupations of board members, other board seats held by board members, the gender or racial composition of the board, the types of board committees the company has adopted, reported number of times the committees met & director attendance, reported director compensation, and who serves in the Chairman position. Given the types of changes you observe, what would you conclude about the company’s goals, strategy, or the intended role of its board?

Class 4, November 2, 2017 – Board of Directors: Structure and Process

Readings:

- Pick et al, “Separation of Chair and CEO Roles” available at: <http://corpgov.law.harvard.edu/2011/09/01/separation-of-chair-and-ceo-roles/>
- Huang, “Zombie Boards: Board Tenure and Firm Performance” (Skim)

Textbook Reference:

- Larcker/Tayan: Chapter 5 – Board of Directors: Structure and Process

In-Class Research Lab: *Measuring Board Power*

Class 5, November 7, 2017 – Board Culture & Dysfunction

Readings:

Case: *Corporate Governance at Hewlett-Packard 1999-2005*

Textbook Reference:

- Larcker/Tayan: Chapter 7: Labor Market for Executives and CEO Succession Planning

Questions for In-Class Consideration: You have been assigned a role of a specific director at Hewlett-Packard. Consider if/when your assigned role behaved in ways inappropriate to their governance role. What factors contributed to the dysfunction of HP’s board?

Topic 2: Governance Outside the Boardroom: Owners, Markets, and Nonmarket Environments

Class 6, November 9, 2017 – The Role of Markets in Ensuring Governance Quality Part 1: The Market for Corporate Control and the Director Labor Market

Readings:

- HBS Case No. 9-801-403, “Circon (A)”, Rev. December 11, 2003

Textbook Reference:

- Larcker/Tayan: Chap. 11: The Market for Corporate Control

Questions for In-class Consideration: Do you think that Circon should have accepted USSC’s offer? Why or why not? What did the board do right and/or wrong in handling the takeover attempt?

Class 7, November 14, 2017 – The Role of Markets in Ensuring Governance Quality Part 2: Markets for Governance

Readings:

- Mark Roe: *Delaware’s Competition* (Skim to answer three questions: 1) Why is Delaware an attractive place to incorporate? 2) What is the basic argument being made by proponents of the ‘race to the top’ vs ‘race to the bottom’ arguments in corporate governance? 3) Who does Roe argue actually poses the most considerable substitution threat for Delaware?)
- Andrew Ross Sorkin, *Reluctantly, Patriot Flees Homeland for Greener Tax Pastures*

In-Class Case: Mylan’s Re-incorporation Abroad

Class 8, November 16, 2017 – Comparative Governance Session: Cross-National Differences in Governance Regimes

- David Larcker and Brian Tayan, 2008 “Models of corporate governance: Who’s the fairest of them all?” Stanford Business School Case CG-11

Textbook Reference:

- Larcker/Tayan: Chap. 2: International Corporate Governance

Assignment 2: Pick a specific country (not the US) and write about how its corporate governance regime differs from that in the US. How does the governance regime affect the costs of doing business in this country? What improvements would you recommend?

Class 9, November 21, 2017 – Group Project Workshop

Class 10, November 28, 2017 – Shareholder Activism: The Appropriate Role of the Shareholder

Readings:

- Black: Shareholder Activism and Corporate Governance in the United States

Textbook Reference:

- Larcker/Tayan: Chap. 12: Institutional Shareholders and Activist Investors

In-Class Research Lab: *Who Are Shareholders and What Are Their Interests?*

Class 11, November 30, 2017 – Social Risk and Corporate-targeted Social Activism

Readings:

Soule: Contention and Corporate Social Responsibility, Chap 1-2

King & Pearce: The contentiousness of markets: Politics, social movements, and institutional change in markets

Assignment 3: Using Factiva, find an example of a social movement targeting a company of your choice with a contentious tactic. In a 2-4 page memo, analyze the movement’s tactics and its ultimate influence. What were the demands of the movement? Did the tactic successful response from its target? What factors do you think contribute to the success (or failure) of contentious tactics? How are these factors similar to or different from those contributing to the success of the social proxy proposals we discussed last week? Which of these fronts for social activism (internal shareholder or external social movement) do you see as more viable, and why?

Class 12, December 5, 2017 – Regulatory Risk and Corporate Political Activity

Readings:

OberHolzer-Gee et al., “Note on Lobbying,” Harvard Business School Document #9-707-471

Jessie Romero, “Money Talks,” Econ Focus, 2014

In-Class Research Lab: *One Industry, One Voice?*

Class 13, December 7, 2017 -- Final Project Presentations