The Wharton School – University of Pennsylvania
FNCE 802
Corporate Governance and Shareholder Activism

Fall 2021
Preliminary Course Syllabus

(Please note that this syllabus is subject to change over the duration of the course; however, the general structure and content of the course will remain the same.)

Professors

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Classroom JMHH 345

FNCE 802 – M/W at 1:45 p.m. – 3:15 p.m.

Course Description

The aim of the course is to provide an introduction to shareholder activism. The course makes use of lectures and case studies. The lectures expose the students to the institutional and empirical facts as well as approaches followed by leading shareholder activists. The case studies are designed to provide students an experience on identifying potential opportunity for value creation through active engagement.

An essential element of the course is learning how to estimate the value of the activism target, and how to assess the potential for value creation through alteration of the company strategy, operations, or financial policy. This potential for unlocking value needs to be assessed, and the resulting value compared to the existing price to assess the quality of the investment thesis. The course assignments require students to develop and practice skills on fundamental analysis.

Reading Materials:

- Case materials and lecture notes on course webpage (Canvas)
- Additional background reading materials will be distributed
- Recommended (but not required) background reading:
  “The Blue Line Imperative,” by Kaiser and Young, 2013
  “Corporate Governance Matters: A Closer Look at Organizational Choices and Their Consequences,” by David Larcker and Brian Tayan
Format:
The structure of the course includes lectures, case discussions, and guest speakers. The major objective of the case method in finance is to **use the logic of financial theory to arrive at sensible conclusions** when faced with real world problems. However, one should keep in mind that there is **not one absolutely right answer to a case; different assumptions can lead to different solutions**. While there are no “right” answers, there are good arguments and bad arguments. The process of this course will help distinguish between sensible and senseless arguments. Considering the professor’s analyses as the correct solution defeats the purpose of this course and contributes to the silly notion that in the “real world” there is a single correct recipe to be followed.

Student Responsibilities and Assessment:
1. **Case Study Assignments**: (60% of the course grade).
   Students will organize themselves into groups of three to five members to work on all cases. Groups must be fixed throughout the course. Diverse background within the group is beneficial. Since group work is a cooperative undertaking, students are urged to ensure that they form groups that are able to work effectively as a group. Although brief discussions across different groups are allowed, exchange of analysis and calculations is not. The major objective of the case method in finance is to **use the logic of financial theory to arrive at sensible conclusions** when faced with real world problems. Therefore, demonstration of the key concepts of financial theory is imperative in these cases.

   There are 7 case studies in the course. All groups must submit a report for the Corteva – Starboard Value negotiation exercise, and the AOL case study. There are 5 remaining cases and each group will select for which 2 of those cases they wish to submit a report which will be graded. The reports to be submitted for a grade (will be referred to as ‘long’ or ‘to be graded’ reports) will be identified prior to Monday, Sept. 13 and each group must inform Prof. Kaiser and the TAs of their selected cases. For the remaining cases, for which the reports will not be graded, each group must submit a ’short’ report demonstrating that they read the case and discussed it among the group.

   **Summary of Submission and Grading of cases:**
   - Each and every group will submit a long report (in pdf format, of maximum 3 pages plus exhibits) for Corteva – Starboard Value
   - Each and every group will submit a long report (in pdf format, of maximum 3 pages plus exhibits) for AOL
   - Each group must select 2 of the remaining 5 cases for which they will submit a "long report" to be graded (in pdf format, of maximum of 3 pages text plus exhibits)
   - Each group must submit a "short report" of maximum 1 page (in pdf format) for the remaining 3 cases for which they did not choose to submit a long report. The short reports will only be graded for "pass" or "fail".

   Supporting computations and tables can be described in the text of the report or in an appendix and submitted in Excel format. All of the inputs and formulas used should be provided. Some of the case assignments contain questions that need to be addressed, however you will also be graded based upon how well you identify the relevant questions and issues to be addressed.
Therefore, whether there are questions for the case or not, please consider what the relevant questions are in the context of each case and discuss why and then perform the necessary analysis to address these questions. The raw data and relevant information for cases will be made available on the course webpage. A subset of groups may be chosen to lead the discussion by presenting their analysis.

2. **Class Participation and Attendance**: (15% of the course grade)
A goal of this course is to provide students with the opportunity to learn how to best contribute to discussions about complex financial issues. Therefore, this class depends and thrives on class participation. It is an important and essential part of this course. Because so much learning in this course occurs in the classroom, it is important that you attend every class. **Voluntary class participation is encouraged. “Cold calls” will be made as to ensure that the class enjoys the benefit of every student’s contribution.** Inadequate class participation combined with several absences can lead to a failing grade. Performance will be judged based on the quality of comments/answers. **Students are expected to prepare for each case and participate actively in class.** To facilitate recording of class participation, please keep the same sitting arrangement throughout the semester.

3. **Topical research paper**: (20% of the course grade)
Each participant should endeavor to increase her/his awareness of activist events and corporate governance news during this course. In order to ensure participants exercise their own curiosity and pursue and apply knowledge outside of the case studies and lecture/speaker sessions presented in the classroom, each participant is responsible for writing an original paper on a corporate governance or shareholder activism issue or event. This “Topical/Reflection Paper” is an opportunity for summarizing your individual and team learning from the course and applying those learnings to a self-selected topical issue/event related to the corporate governance/shareholder activism. Each group will present their original work to the class in the sessions 25-27 of the course.

4. **Individual Reflection paper (5% of the course grade)**
Learning is an effortful process and I have added this assignment in place of a final exam. The purpose of this exercise is to ensure that each individual devotes some time (a couple hours or more) to reflecting back on this course and trying to recall and deepen your understanding of the many topics and concepts covered. You are expected to submit (along with the group paper) your individual reflections on what you learned during this course and the insights you gained. It is expected to be between 2-5 pages and address the following elements: (1) Summarize and demonstrate understanding of the concepts taught in this course, (2) Summarize the insights you gained, and (3) Describe how these insights will impact you/your behavior going forward.

Please do not be evaluative (e.g., please avoid statements such as "I really loved the session when we talked about..." or "I found the discussion around xxx to be very confusing...")
Simply emphasize your learning by structuring your reflections as, "What I learned was ...."
Grading will be based on the depth and quality of your reflections as reflected in the depth
and quality of the learning and insights you share in this report.

**Important Note Concerning Group Grading Process:**
To provide effective governance and to encourage effective teamwork, grades for groupwork will be
allocated according to contribution allocations as assessed by the other members of your group for ALL
group members of ALL groups. All group members are required to provide a response to the survey
question below after all group work for the course has been completed. The results will apply to group
grade allocation across group members for ALL of the groupwork throughout the course,

**Survey question to be answered by all students enrolled in the course:**

Please provide an allocation out of 100% for the contribution made by the individual
members of your group to all group work submitted in this course, excluding any measure of
your own contribution, such that the sum totals 100%.

Each group member’s contribution will be assessed as the average of the percentages
reported by the other members of the group. For example, if you are in a 5-member group
and the other four members of your group gave you contribution allocations of 20%, 20%,
25% and 15%, then your average is 20% across 4 people, which translates into 16% across 5
(which puts you below average).

See the chart below as a sample template:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group member name:</th>
<th>Howard Marks</th>
<th>Marie Curie</th>
<th>Mary O’Connor</th>
<th>Martin Luther King, Jr.</th>
<th>Michael Jordan</th>
<th>Allocation (out of 25%)</th>
<th>Percent allocation (out of 20%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Howard Marks</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marie Curie</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary O’Connor</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin Luther King, Jr.</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Jordan</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
<td><strong>125%</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Your own grade will be the average of the contribution allocated by you as reported by your teammates.
For example, if your 4 teammates gave you contribution allocations of 20%, 20%, 15% and 25%, such as
for Howard Marks above, then your average allocation would be 20% as assessed by your 4 teammates,
which results in a relative contribution of 16% out of 20% for your contribution to the team. In this case,
your team grade will be reduced by 4% of the team average grade. As another example, had your teammates
given you contribution allocations of 25%, 25%, 25%, and 25%, such as for Marie Curie above, then your
average allocation would be 25%, which results in a relative contribution of 20% out of 20%.

Your resulting relative contribution allocation as rated by your teammates will then be used to either
add to or deduct from the team’s overall grade on the group assignments according to the distance your
relative contribution allocation is away from 20% (for groups of 5) or 25% (for groups of 4). Each 1%
above/below the mean will result in an addition/deduction of 1% of the group grade. Therefore, for
example if your group grade is 18/20 on the TER Negotiation exercise and your relative contribution
is rated 24% in a team of 5, such as for Martin Luther King, Jr. above, so that you are 4% above the
mean of 20% for relative contribution, then your grade on the TER Negotiation exercise will be 104%
× 18 = 18.72/20. As another example, if you are in the same group with a group grade of 18/20 but your
relative contribution is rated 14% in a team of 5, then your grade will be 94% × 18 = 16.92/20.

**Code of Ethics:**
Submitted assignments for grading should be your own or your team’s own work only. Most cases in this course involve actual companies. You may use firm specific or market data that are publicly available for your analysis. You cannot, however, use analysis originating/belonging to others e.g. banks, hedge funds. Failure to observe this rule may result in an automatic failing grade for the course.

**Office Hours and Contact Information:**

Bilge Yilmaz:  
Office Hours: tbd  
Email: yilmaz@wharton.upenn.edu

Kevin Kaiser:  
Office Hours: tbd  
Email: kaiserk@wharton.upenn.edu
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class #</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Monday, August 30, 2021</td>
<td>Course Intro &amp; Who are Activist Investors?</td>
<td>no assignment today</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Wednesday, September 1, 2021</td>
<td>Introduction to Corporate Governance</td>
<td>no assignment today</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Monday, September 6, 2021</td>
<td>NO CLASSES _LABOR DAY</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Wednesday, September 8, 2021</td>
<td>Value Investing Foundations</td>
<td>no assignment today</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Monday, September 13, 2021</td>
<td>Activist Toolkit - Proxy advisors and campaign</td>
<td>Apple: Corp Governance &amp; Carl Icahn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Wednesday, September 15, 2021</td>
<td>Proxy proposals and Proxy fights</td>
<td>Apple, continued</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Monday, September 20, 2021</td>
<td>Intro and Overview of Activist HF</td>
<td>no assignment today</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Wednesday, September 22, 2021</td>
<td>Activist Hedge Funds</td>
<td>no assignment today</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Monday, September 27, 2021</td>
<td>Defending against a Shareholder Activist</td>
<td>Speakers (Bobby Katz &amp; Sebastian Niles)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Wednesday, September 29, 2021</td>
<td>Communication and Strategy</td>
<td>Canadian Pacific</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Monday, October 4, 2021</td>
<td>Corteva setup</td>
<td>Corteva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Wednesday, October 6, 2021</td>
<td>Corteva negotiation</td>
<td>Corteva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Monday, October 11, 2021</td>
<td>Defending against a Shareholder Activist</td>
<td>Speaker - Schulte, Roth &amp; Zabel (Ele Klein)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wednesday, October 13, 2021</td>
<td>no MBA classes</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Monday, October 18, 2021</td>
<td>no MBA classes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wednesday, October 20, 2021</td>
<td>no MBA classes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Monday, October 25, 2021</td>
<td>Investment Banking Support</td>
<td>no assignment today</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Wednesday, October 27, 2021</td>
<td>Applying the activist toolkit</td>
<td>ZAYO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Monday, November 1, 2021</td>
<td>Applying the activist toolkit</td>
<td>Marvell - report due date (Jon Sagal &amp; Aj</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Wednesday, November 3, 2021</td>
<td>AOL</td>
<td>AOL - report due date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Monday, November 8, 2021</td>
<td>AOL</td>
<td>AOL - continuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Wednesday, November 10, 2021</td>
<td>Darden</td>
<td>Darden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Monday, November 15, 2021</td>
<td>Chairman Speaker</td>
<td>Marvell - revisited (Rick Hill, Board Chair)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Wednesday, November 17, 2021</td>
<td>Activism in Japan OR Lululemon</td>
<td>FANUC Japan or Lululemon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Monday, November 22, 2021</td>
<td>no MBA classes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wednesday, November 24, 2021</td>
<td>Thanksgiving - no class today</td>
<td>Thanksgiving break</td>
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<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Monday, November 29, 2021</td>
<td>Reflection</td>
<td>Research Papers due</td>
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<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Wednesday, December 1, 2021</td>
<td>Topical Paper presentations</td>
<td>Group presentations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Monday, December 6, 2021</td>
<td>Topical Paper presentations &amp; wrap-up</td>
<td>Group presentations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Wednesday, December 8, 2021</td>
<td>Topical Paper presentations</td>
<td>Group presentations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Readings

- Kaiser and Young, Managing for Value 2.0, *Journal of Applied Corporate Finance*, 
- Chapters 1 & 2, from *The Blue Line Imperative*, by Kaiser and Young, 2013 
- Berk and DeMarzo, “Corporate Finance”, Chapter 29, 4th Edition
- Graham, Kim and Leary, “CEO Power and Board Dynamics,” March 2017
- Chapter 12, “Institutional Shareholders and Activist Investors,” from Corporate Governance Matters, by Larcker and Tayan
- Bebchuk, Brav, Jiang, and Keusch, Dancing with Activists, June 2017
- Becht et. al., Returns to Shareholder Activism: Evidence from a clinical study of the Hermes UK Focus Fund, 2006
• Entrepreneurial Shareholder Activism: Hedge Funds and Other Private Investors. Klein and Zur (2009)


• Chapter 19 “Takeover Defenses”, in Weston, Mitchell and Mulherin (Takeovers, Restructuring, and Corporate Governance).

• O’Byrne, Measuring and Improving Pay for Performance: Board Oversight of Executive Pay, The Handbook of Board Governance, 2016

• The controversy over executive compensation, Journal of Applied Corporate Finance, Nov 2003, 108-111

• Towner and Virani, Insider Activism, University of Arizona, March 2017

• Dealing with Activist Hedge Funds and Other Activist Investors, by Martin Lipton, Wachtell, Lipton, Rosen & Katz, Harvard Law School Forum on Corporate Governance and Financial Regulation, January 2017

• Proxy Contests, by Warren S. DeWied, November 2010, Practical Law

• Tonello, The Activism of Carl Icahn and Bill Ackman, Harvard Law School Forum on Corporate Governance and Financial Regulation, May 2014


Cases (non-Wharton)

• Case study: Valuing Yahoo! 2013 (HBS 9-214-048)

• Case study: Apple: Corporate Governance and Stock Buyback (Ivey, W14736)

• Case study: Canadian Pacific (A), (B), and (C) (Ivey, W17568, W17569, W17570)

• Case study: FANUC – Japan (HBS 9-216-042)