

Introductory Information for FIN 361 Online

Welcome to FIN 361 Online. I am Dr. Del Hawley. I created this course and have taught it for more than 10 years. Dr. Violetta Davydenko, Instructional Assistant Professor of Finance, will be my co-instructor for this semester. We both look forward to working with you throughout this course.

Please read this document carefully, as it contains lots of important information concerning the course.

Where is all of the information about the course?

Everything you need for this course is on the class website:

<http://faculty.bus.olemiss.edu/dhawley/FIN361>

What is this class really about?

This course will focus on using Microsoft Excel to conduct a wide range of financial analysis and modeling to reinforce and extend your understanding of fundamental topics in corporate finance that were covered in FIN 331. It will concentrate on corporate finance rather than investments. It is a "hands-on" course in which you will work directly in Excel to explore most of the powerful features of Excel and similar spreadsheet software. You will develop a valuable and marketable skill set that will serve you well in any career path that you choose.

This course will build on the content of FIN 331 (Business Finance I) which is a firm prerequisite. It will also be helpful as a precursor or follow-up course for FIN 338 (Intermediate Financial Management) and will serve you well in any other finance or accounting course you take.

Since this is a course that focuses on learning to use spreadsheet software well in a corporate finance environment, it is very hands-on. Almost everything we do will be done in Microsoft Excel. In the recorded tutorials that I provide as the primary content delivery method for the course, I will be working in Excel while explaining what I am doing. You will work along with me on your computer to complete the operations and examples. The video format allows you to pause the presentation while you carry out an operation, back up and review if necessary, or skip parts that cover things you already know.

Above all, this course is intended to be practical, useful, and interesting. As with any course, what you get out of it will be directly related to what you put into it. If you take it seriously and work hard at it, you will have something very valuable to take away from it.

Who am I, and why am I teaching this class?

I am the Senior Associate Dean of the Ole Miss business school and an Associate Professor of Finance. I have used spreadsheet software for as long as it has existed (which isn't that long, really), and have included it in courses I have taught since 1988. I was the first professor at Ole Miss to obtain and use a computer projection system in a classroom, and I used it to teach finance and MBA students how to use spreadsheet software. In 1988 I got a grant from the

University to purchase the first video projector at the University of Mississippi, a huge three-lamp CRT analog monster from Sony that weighed about 120 pounds and cost the equivalent of about \$25,000 today, and an early-version PC that I set up on a rolling cart so I could take the two units into classrooms to teach finance students how to use spreadsheet software (Lotus 1-2-3 at that time). I have included spreadsheet usage and instruction in every course I have taught since then, and I use it all day every day in my work as CFO for the school (one of the hats I wear here).

In the Fall of 2009 I created a new class, FIN 531, that was essentially this course but in a classroom setting rather than online. I taught it in the Fall, in the January intersession, and in the Spring that year. While doing that, I decided that it would work very well as an online course and began the planning process for that. We created a new course number for it as a 300-level course to make it available to students earlier than their senior year and to restrict enrollment to only undergraduate students. So this is the result. The online version of the course was first offered in the 2010 Summer semester.

An Important Note About Exams:

There are four exams for this course. The dates are in the course schedule. Additional important information about the exams is on the Syllabus page of the class website (<http://faculty.bus.olemiss.edu/dhawley/fin361/syllabus.htm>) under "Exams", and I also discuss the exams in the course overview recording.

One thing to note about the exams is that you will be taking them through ProctorU, an online proctoring service that uses active human proctoring. It's a great service that I have used for many years. **There is a fee of \$33.75 per exam that you will have to pay when you schedule each exam, and you must schedule your exams at least 72 hours in advance or an additional late fee will be added.** More information about ProctorU and the testing procedure is provided in the syllabus and detailed instructions will be provided to you before the first exam.

Except for the exams, there is nothing in the course that requires you to be in any particular place during the course, as long as you have a computer and good internet access wherever you are.

A VERY Important Note About Exams:

Read this sentence five times: The exams you will take are at least 95% IDENTICAL to the large number of past exams that are posted on the class website with solutions, which are all at least 95% IDENTICAL to each other.

Why would I do that? Because I want you to know exactly what you will be asked on the exams you will take so there is no confusion about what you need to know how to do. You will have to actually *do* those things, and they are in many cases complex and intimidating, but there should be no surprises.

So, your best strategy for making a high grade in this course is to use those past exams to practice doing the EXACT things you will need to do on the exams you will take. It always astounds me how every semester, some students can ignore this gift of perfect knowledge of what they will need to be able to do and don't look at or use those sample exams and, not surprisingly, do a spectacular crash and burn on one or even more than one of their exams. Some even express surprise at how they could have done so badly, even though they didn't take my advice to use those past exams to prepare. Don't be one of those people, as they are not people whose level of mental acumen is something you should seek to emulate.

A few questions that usually come up are:

Does it matter what version of Excel I use? YES, it does. Anything from version 2013 on will work, but newer is definitely better as you need to be familiar with the most current features in order to be able to know Excel's true value to you. Office 365 is a good option because it always gives you the most current version, which is 2019 right now, and gives you some other tools and resources that are useful. The current 8th edition of the textbook is based on version 2016. There is information on the Syllabus page of the class website on how to purchase Microsoft Office at academic pricing if you need to obtain a copy of the current version.

VERY IMPORTANT NOTE CONCERNING OFFICE 365

While I heartily recommend Office 365 for many reasons, ***you can't use the Free Educational version*** that you will be directed to if you go to the "Office 365 Education" webpage (<https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/education/products/office>) and enter your email address in the provided input box. That will direct you to a free version that provides only the online applications of Excel and the other Office programs, but does not provide the desktop applications that include the full Excel program.

What you need is the paid subscription version for education (Microsoft 365 Personal) that can be purchased for \$69.99 at <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/microsoft-365/buy/compare-all-microsoft-365-products?&activetab=1>. Either of the other two versions that are offered on that page (shown below) is fine as well if they meet your needs for additional users (Microsoft 365 Family) or for a one-time non-subscription purchase (Office Home & Student 2019).

Best value: up to 6 people on PC or Mac

Product	Price	Subscription	Apps Included
Microsoft 365 Family (formerly Office 365 Home)	\$99.99 / year	Subscription (Buy now, Or buy at \$9.99 per month, Try free for 1 month >)	Premium apps: Word, Excel, PowerPoint, OneNote, Outlook, Access (PC only), Publisher (PC only)
Microsoft 365 Personal (formerly Office 365 Personal)	\$69.99 / year	Subscription (Buy now, Or buy at \$6.99 per month)	Premium apps: Word, Excel, PowerPoint, OneNote, Outlook, Access (PC only), Publisher (PC only)
Office Home & Student 2019 (One-time purchase For Mac and PC)	\$149.99	One-time purchase (Buy now)	Classic apps: Word, Excel, PowerPoint

Can you use an earlier version of Excel (earlier than 2013)? No. The interface (menus and layouts) was completely revised in Version 2013.

What if you have a Mac computer rather than a Windows PC? This could be a problem. There are some fairly significant differences between the Mac version of Excel and the Windows version. Neither I nor Dr. Davydenko has a Mac and therefore we will not be much help on the differences. Some students have successfully completed the course using a Mac, but their degree of success depended on their computer knowledge coming into the course. If you are at all uncomfortable with computer usage, I would advise against trying to use a Mac for this course.

When are assignments due? There will only be one assignment in this course, other than the exams, and that is for the mandatory attendance verification rule that was put in place at the beginning of the 2015 Fall semester. This will be a short quiz that you take online by the end of the 2nd week of classes to confirm that you are active in the course. Failure to submit this assignment by the due date will result in your being dropped from the course. Successful completion can add up to 10 extra credit points to your total points (out of 400 possible) for the class. You will receive more information on this assignment very shortly after the semester begins.

Nothing else will be handed in for this course except your exams. Your job is to work through the material in each section of the course to prepare to take each exam on a specific day. The exams are approximately four weeks apart. It is your responsibility to schedule your time to master the material covered on each exam. Your grade will depend entirely on your performance on those exams.

What do you do if you have a question or need to communicate with me or Dr. Davydenko?

We are always happy to hear from you and to answer any questions or help you understand the material. Email is always that best way to communicate (dhawley@bus.olemiss.edu or vdavydenko@bus.olemiss.edu) with the following guidelines and caveats:

1. Before you ask a question about the material, make sure you have worked along with the videos that cover the topic of your question. In other words, don't ask me a question that I have already answered. I am always happy to help you understand anything that I have covered, but you need to do the background work before asking.

2. If you are having a problem making something work in Excel, send me the spreadsheet you are working on so I can see what you have done. That way I can find your error and quickly tell you how to fix it.

Important Note on Email Communication

Your go.olemiss.edu email address is the official avenue of communication from the University, Dr. Davydenko, and me to you. ***Any message you receive in that account from anyone at The University of Mississippi has been officially and legally communicated to you and you are bound by its contents whether you read it or not.*** It will be the primary method through which we communicate with you, so be sure to check that email account often.

What do you need to do to get started?

Go to the class website at <http://faculty.bus.olemiss.edu/dhawley/FIN361/>, navigate to the Schedule page, and click on the link for the first video: **00-01 Introduction to This Course**. Follow the instructions for running the video, which explains everything about the course.

Note that if you prefer captioned videos, those are available in a shared Google Drive folder for the class. All students in the class will be given access to that folder. You can download the videos that are there and they should play with no problem. If you do encounter any problem playing them with the captions, let me know and I will do everything I can to resolve the quickly resolve the problem.

If you still have any question after watching the introductory video, email Dr. Davydenko or me and we will be happy to help.

We hope you find this class to be helpful and valuable, and we look forward to working with you this semester!