

**M339W/M389W(unique: 55015/55395): Financial Mathematics
for Actuarial Applications**
Spring 2021, University of Texas at Austin
Instructor: Milica Čudina

First-Day Information Sheet

Welcome! Here is some information and some ground rules. I will stick to these rules, and I assume you will, too. Read carefully, and let me know as soon as possible – **certainly by the 12th day of classes: February 3rd, 2021** – if there is anything unclear.

This syllabus is subject to change; students who miss class are responsible for learning about any changes to the syllabus.

Treat this document like a contract.

Technicalities

Lectures: Mon/Wed/Fri 9:00-10:00am via **Zoom**. You will be sent further instructions and the Zoom link prior to the first class meeting. There is also a link to Zoom in Canvas on the left-hand side of the screen.

Office Hours: By appointment via **Zoom**. You can email your instructor 48 hours in advance to request a half-hour time slot at any time during the following windows: **Tue/Thu 8am-10am and 1pm-6pm**. When requesting an appointment, you should specify whether your appointment should be *private* or *public*. If you choose *private*, you will receive a designated Zoom link and nobody else will be allowed into the meeting. If you choose *public*, the Zoom link will be shared with the entire class. Note that if the purpose of the meeting is to simply check if your homework/quiz answers are correct, then your Zoom meeting **must** be *private*. If you fail to appear at two requested meetings, you will lose the right to request any further office-hour meetings.

My e-mail: It's best to email me through Canvas. My email address is: mcudina@math.utexas.edu

Office: My usual office is PMA 13.142 (2515 Speedway, Austin, TX 78712), but I will **not** be spending any time there due to the pandemic

About the Course

Introductory remarks

- ◇ *Course URL.* <https://gordanz.github.io/cudina/M339W.html>
- ◇ *Course description.* This course is intended to provide the **mathematical foundations** necessary to prepare for a portion of the SoA Exam IFM or the CAS Exam 3F.

Additionally, the course is aimed at building the vocabulary and the techniques indispensable in the workplace at current financial and insurance institutions. **This is not an exam-prep seminar.**

The material exhibited includes: a review of binomial option pricing, an in-depth study of the normal and log-normal distributions, the Black-Scholes pricing formula, analysis of option Greeks, market making, Monte-Carlo simulations, mean-variance portfolio theory, asset-pricing models, market efficiency and behavioral finance, investment risk and project analysis, capital structure.

The remainder of the Exam IFM/3F curriculum is exhibited in course M339D (also offered by the Department of Mathematics).

A thorough understanding of probability will be needed to advance through the varied and very dense material. The students will be expected to actively participate in the class meetings and contribute to the successful conclusion of this course.

◇ *Learning objectives.*

- The student will develop understanding of the dynamics of stock prices, focusing on the renowned Black-Scholes model.
- The student will generalize the risk-neutral pricing principle established in a discrete setting to the continuous model, namely, the Black-Scholes model.
- The student will generalize the concept of sensitivity to perturbations of a single input encountered in calculus to the portfolio-price environment.
- The student will become competent in the study the relationship between exposure to risk and expected return of a financial investment.
- The student will learn to appreciate the concept of diversification - useful in real life.
- The student will link the study of financial markets to that of classical insurance.

◇ *Prerequisites.* Course M339D with a grade of at least C-.

◇ *QR.* This course carries the Quantitative Reasoning flag. Quantitative Reasoning courses are designed to equip you with skills that are necessary for understanding the types of quantitative arguments you will regularly encounter in your adult and professional life. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from your use of quantitative skills to analyze real-world problems.

◇ *Textbook.* There is **no required** textbook. Class notes written by the instructor will be posted on the course website. If you wish any additional resources, ask the instructor. The textbooks recommended by the SoA and CAS are:

- *"Derivatives Markets"* by McDonald (3rd edition), and
- *"Corporate Finance"* by Berk and DeMarzo (2nd edition).

◇ *Class format and online attendance.* The class will be conducted completely online. Attendance for the purposes of grading will not be taken.

Online resources.

- Zoom** will be used for all classes and for office hours. Videos of all zoom sessions (except for private meetings) will be accessible to all students via Canvas. They will include transcripts of the lectures and chat logs (with possible delay due to processing).
- Canvas** will be used in this course to keep track of grades and for communication purposes. The students are responsible for the content of these announcements. The easiest way not to miss any is to turn on (i.e. not turn off) Announcements in their account's Notification menu.
- Piazza** will be used for informal class discussion. The system is highly catered to getting you help fast and efficiently from classmates and myself. Rather than emailing questions to the instructor, I encourage you to post your questions on Piazza. Our class signup link is <https://www.piazza.com/utexas/spring2021/m339w>

Sharing of Course Materials is Prohibited.

No materials used in this class, including, but not limited to, lecture hand-outs, videos, assessments (quizzes, exams, papers, projects, homework assignments), in-class materials, review sheets, and additional problem sets, may be shared online or with anyone outside of the class unless you have my explicit, written permission. Unauthorized sharing of materials promotes cheating. It is a violation of the University's Student Honor Code and an act of academic dishonesty. I am well aware of the sites used for sharing materials, and any materials found online that are associated with you, or any suspected unauthorized sharing of materials, will be reported to Student Conduct and Academic Integrity in the Office of the Dean of Students. These reports can result in sanctions, including failure in the course.

Class Recordings.

Class recordings are reserved only for students in this class for educational purposes and are protected under FERPA. The recordings should not be shared outside the class in any form. Violation of this restriction by a student could lead to Student Misconduct proceedings.

On assignments and grading

Homework. Homework assignments will be available on the course website. Homework assignments will **not** be posted on Canvas, however you will be uploading your solutions using Canvas. Your solutions need to be in order and you should number the pages.

Having read and understood this *First-Day Handout* in its entirety will count as a homework assignment. To get the credit, read this entire document with understanding by February 3rd, 2021. Not handing in this assignment does **not exempt you from abiding by this First-Day Handout.**

The lowest two homework scores will be dropped. The homework assignments and their due dates will be announced on the course website as the term progresses.

Quizzes. You will have various short warm-up and review worksheets to complete at home and upload to Canvas. Think of quizzes as "mini-homework".

The lowest two quiz scores will be dropped. The quizzes and their due dates will be announced on the course website as the term progresses.

The In-Term Exams. There will be a total of **three** in-term exams. Their dates are:

- **March 3rd**
- **April 5th**
- **April 30th**

You will receive specific instructions for each exam by email. The exams themselves will be Canvas quizzes proctored by Proctorio. You will receive a 24-hour window during which you will be able to complete the 50-minute exam (at the time of your choosing) and submit your solutions in Canvas. We will practice this feature through mock-exam homework assignments before the actual exams.

The Final Exam.

Due to extenuating circumstances, there will be no comprehensive final exam.

These are the things you should have available during an exam:

- i. a sufficient amount of paper to work on;
- ii. calculators of any kind (I recommend the *Texas Instruments TI-30XS MultiView Scientific Calculator*; it works well and it is allowed in actuarial exams);
- iii. your own IFM Exam formula sheet with the standard normal tables (available on the course website).

These are the things you *must not* have available during the exams: books, notes, manuals, cheat sheets, anything containing solved problems.

Since you will not be in our regular classroom setting, it is of utmost importance to preserve the integrity of your exam-taking. It is imperative that you do not communicate with anyone about the exam content prior to the due time of the exam. Finally, consulting the internet is out of bounds.

If you provide me with a written proof that your absence was "legitimate" (e.g., a note from your doctor), make-up arrangements will be made on a case-by-case basis.

Your scores are non-negotiable.

The Final Grades. These are the **weights** assigned to the assessment components:

Homework average (after the two lowest scores are dropped): 25%

Quizzes (after the two lowest scores are dropped): 15%

In-term exams (each): 20%

I trust that the way this course is organized will be conducive to no late assignment submissions or missed in-term exams. Having said this, if you do experience any technical or health difficulties in timely assignment submission, let me know and we'll work to find a solution. As always, and especially in these extreme circumstances, if there are non-academic issues you are facing, feel free to reach out to your instructor.

Graduate students. Students who are taking this as a graduate course will be having extra special homework assignments. They should contact the instructor about the exact content of those assignments.

Final grades. The final letter grades will be assigned relative to your numerical score obtained from the above scheme in the following way:

A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	F
94-100	90-94	86-90	82-86	78-82	74-78	70-74	65-70	60-65	55-60	50-55	0-50

The grades will not be “curved”!!!!

Some friendly advice

- ◇ *Please, come prepared to every class meeting* – review your notes, pay attention to the current material, and bring the necessary supplies (most importantly – the calculator of your choosing).

Meaningful class and Piazza participation will earn you extra credit at the sole discretion of your instructor.

- ◇ *Discuss the course with your colleagues* - In order to be able to participate in class, you first need to build up a vocabulary - and there will be a lot of new vocabulary in the beginning. Who better to practice the new concepts with than your classmates who are in the same situation? I suggest that you try to work on homework assignments in pairs and small groups. You can set up your own Zoom meetings with colleagues. Of course, you will be required to write up your own final version (and I urge you to do so - that is the only way you will be able to tell what your individual knowledge is, as opposed to the collective knowledge of your study-group).

Due to social distancing, it is impossible for you to have your regular study-group meetings. Please, take advantage of the "Discussions" feature in Canvas or use Piazza.

- ◇ *Don't try to cheat* - This is an unpleasant topic, but unfortunately a necessary one! One is often tempted to stretch the boundaries of mere discussion/collaboration with a fellow student into the territory of pure and simple cheating. In short, everything that you present as your own work (especially the work that is supposed to be graded!) should, in fact, be your own work, and not something copied from an external source. In case that a student is caught in violation of the principles of academic honesty enforced at this university, they will immediately be reported to the higher authorities and assigned a failing grade in this course. You are expected to have read and understood the current issue of General Information Catalog, published by the Registrars Office, for information about procedures and about what constitutes scholastic dishonesty. Please visit <https://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/conduct/academicintegrity.php>.

Some might find the virtual-assessment environment tempting. Remember that you are Longhorns!

- ◇ *Have realistic impressions of your performance* The grading scheme for this course is described above and I do not intend to stray from it. You are solely responsible for keeping a tally of your scores throughout the semester and entering your results in the grading formula above to avoid any surprises at the end of the semester.
- ◇ *On email and office hours* - Email should be used for brief messages about the organization of and current goings on in the course. As a rule, you should first consult the first-day handout to see if your question is answered here. If there is still any ambiguity, contact the instructor. Your instructor is handling a great number of email messages. You should not expect to have your particular email answered in less than 48 hours. If you have a math question, you can take a photo/scan of your work and email it to me as an attachment. To get an answer to this type of questions, you should then come to Zoom office hours and ask in person. When coming to office hours, you should be able to present the mathematical question you have, the route(s) you took in attempting to solve the problem and the obstacles you encountered. Posting your question on Piazza would be the most expedient course of action.

UT mandated notes

- ◇ *Drop dates.* The last drop date for this class is the one announced on the academic calendar of the University of Texas at Austin (see <http://registrar.utexas.edu/calendars/>). This term it is **April 5th, 2021**.
- ◇ “Counselling and Mental Health Center Student Services Bldg (SSB), 5th Floor Hours: M–F 8am–5pm; phone: 512 471 3515(appointments), 512 471 CALL (crisis line); <http://www.cmhc.utexas.edu>”
- ◇ “The University of Austin provides upon request appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. For more information, contact the Office of the Dean of Students at 471- 6259, 471-6441 TTY or <http://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/>”
- ◇ “Religious holy days sometimes conflict with class and examination schedules. Sections 51.911 and 51.925 of the Texas Education Code relate to absences by students and instructors for observance of religious holy days.

Section 51.911 states that a student who misses an examination, work assignment, or other project due to the observance of a religious holy day must be given an opportunity to complete the work missed within a reasonable time after the absence, provided that he or she has properly notified each instructor.

It is the policy of The University of Texas at Austin that the student must notify each instructor at least fourteen days prior to the classes scheduled on dates he or she will be absent to observe a religious holy day. For religious holidays that fall within the first two weeks of the semester, the notice should be given on the first day of the semester. The student may not be penalized for these excused absences but the instructor may appropriately respond if the student fails to complete satisfactorily the missed assignment or examination within a reasonable time after the excused absence.”

This syllabus is subject to modification. Any changes will be announced in class.

A VERY TENTATIVE schedule

#	Wday	Date	Material to be covered
1	W	Jan 20	Getting used to Zoom. Binomial asset pricing (review).
2	F	Jan 22	Binomial option pricing (review).
3	M	Jan 25	Binomial option pricing; futures options and currency options.
4	W	Jan 27	Real options.
5	F	Jan 29	Subjective expectations and forward contracts.
6	M	Feb 1	Scaled random walk. CLT. Realized returns.
7	W	Feb 3	
8	F	Feb 5	
9	M	Feb 8	
10	W	Feb 10	
11	F	Feb 12	
12	M	Feb 15	
13	W	Feb 17	
14	F	Feb 19	
15	M	Feb 22	
16	W	Feb 24	Re-orientation
17	F	Feb 26	Problem-solving session.
18	M	Mar 1	The log-normal distribution. Jensen's inequality.
19	W	Mar 3	In-term exam I.
20	F	Mar 5	Log-normal stock prices. Parameter interpretation.
21	M	Mar 8	Measures of risk: variance, semi-variance, VaR.
22	W	Mar 10	Log-normal tail probabilities. VaR (revisited).
23	F	Mar 12	Log-normal partial and conditional expectations.
24	M	Mar 22	The Black-Scholes pricing formula.
25	W	Mar 24	Greeks in the Black-Scholes pricing.
26	F	Mar 26	Focus on the Delta.
27	M	Mar 29	Option elasticity and volatility.
28	W	Mar 31	Focus on the Gamma. Other Greeks.
29	F	Apr 2	Implied volatility. $\Delta - \Gamma - \Theta$ approximation.
30	M	Apr 5	In-term exam II.
31	W	Apr 7	Market making and Δ -hedging.
32	F	Apr 9	Δ -hedger's profit.
33	M	Apr 12	$\Delta - \Gamma$ -hedging.
34	W	Apr 14	Exchange options.
35	F	Apr 16	The expected return and volatility of a portfolio.
36	M	Apr 19	Diversification. Choosing an efficient portfolio.
37	W	Apr 21	Feasible sets. The effect of correlation.
38	F	Apr 23	Sharpe ratio.
39	M	Apr 26	Required returns. Betas of stocks. CAPM (Assumptions).
40	W	Apr 28	CAPM (Consequences).
41	F	Apr 30	In-term exam III.
42	M	May 3	Alphas of stocks.
43	W	May 5	Market efficiency (revisited). Multifactor models.
44	F	May 7	SVLN. Monte Carlo simulation.