



University of Iowa

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**ACTS:4380**  
**Mathematics of Finance II**  
**Course Syllabus**  
**Spring 2020**

**MWF, 118 MLH**  
**2:30 p.m. – 3:20 p.m.**

**COLLEGE OF**  
**LIBERAL ARTS & SCIENCES**  
**Department of Statistics &**  
**Actuarial Science**  
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Department of Statistics and  
Actuarial Science

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## 1 Contact Information

- **Instructor:** Professor Ambrose Lo, PhD, FSA, CERA

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**(Note: Please put “ACTS:4380” in the subject line)**
- ▷ *Personal homepage:* <https://sites.google.com/site/ambroseloy>  
(Feel free to visit it from time to time for latest updates on my courses and books!)
- ▷ *Office (walk-in) hours:*  
Tuesday: 2:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.  
Thursday: 2:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. and 4:30 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.  
Also available by appointment

Students are welcome to drop by during these hours to discuss any questions about this course.

- **Grader:** Mr. Hong Beng (Ben) Lim

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**(Note: Please put “ACTS:4380” in the subject line)**

- **Departmental Executive Officer (Chair):** Professor Kung-Sik Chan

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## 2 Course Description and Objectives

Prerequisites:

- ACTS:3080 (Mathematics of Finance I) with a minimum grade of C+
- Status as Actuarial Science major

Recommendations:

- Having taken or concurrently taking FIN:3300 (Corporate Finance)
- Concurrently taking ACTS:4010 (Actuarial Exam IFM Preparation)

Building upon students' prior exposure to actuarial science and preparation in mathematical statistics, this intermediate course on mathematical finance for B.S. and M.S. in Actuarial Science students explores option pricing in a reasonably mathematical manner and prepares you adequately for the *derivatives portion* (i.e., Topics 6 to 10) of the **Investment and Financial Markets (IFM) Exam** offered by the Society of Actuaries (SOA). It consists of three interrelated parts of varying degrees of technical sophistication:

Part I.	Conceptual Foundation on Derivatives	(approx. 5 weeks)
Part II.	Pricing and Hedging of Derivatives	
II-A.	Discrete-time Option Pricing Models	(approx. 2 weeks)
II-B.	Continuous-time Option Pricing Models	(approx. 7 weeks)
Part III.	Epilogue: General Properties of Option Prices	(approx. 1 week)

Here is a synopsis of this course:

- Part I (Chapters 1 to 3) lays the conceptual groundwork of the whole course by setting up the terminology of derivatives commonly encountered in the literature and introducing the definition, mechanics, typical use, and payoff structures of the two primary groups of derivatives, namely, forwards and options, which bestow upon their holders an obligation and a right to trade an underlying asset at a fixed price on a fixed date, respectively. Particular emphasis is placed on how and why a derivative works in a given scenario of interest. In due course, we also present the all-important *no-arbitrage assumption* and the method of *pricing by replication*. Underlying the pricing and hedging of derivatives throughout this course, these two vehicles are applied in this part to determine the fair price of a forward, where “fair” is meant in the sense that the resulting price permits no free lunch opportunities.
- In Part II (Chapters 4 to 8), which is the centerpiece of this course, we build upon the background material in Part I and tackle option pricing in two stages—first in the discrete-time binomial tree model (Chapter 4), which is simple, intuitive, and easy to implement, then in the technically more challenging continuous-time Black-Scholes model (Chapters 5 to 8). In this part, the no-arbitrage assumption and the method of replication continue to play a vital role in valuing options and lead to the celebrated *risk-neutral pricing formula*. The implementation and far-reaching implications of the method of risk-neutral valuation for the pricing and hedging of derivatives are explored in Chapters 6 to 8.
- Finally, we end in Part III (Chapter 9) with a description of some general properties satisfied by option prices when no asset price model is prescribed. Even in this model-free framework setting, there is a rich theory describing the no-arbitrage properties universally satisfied by option prices. Although this part can be studied prior to completing Part II, you will find that

what you learn from Part II, especially the notion of an exchange option in Chapter 8, will provide you with some surprisingly useful insights into the connections between different options.

After taking this course, the successful student is expected to:

1. Understand the mechanics and typical use of different kinds of financial derivatives.
2. Price options on a wide variety of underlying assets using different pricing methodologies.
3. Realize the assumptions and limitations of each class of option pricing models.
4. Take and, most importantly, pass Exam IFM in July 2020 with considerable ease.

### 3 Exam IFM

Exam IFM is a three-hour computer-based exam that consists of 30 multiple-choice questions, each of which includes 5 answer choices identified by (A), (B), (C), (D), and (E). It was offered for the first time in July 2018 and replaced its predecessor, Exam MFE (Models for Financial Economics), which was exclusively about the use and pricing of derivatives. Exam IFM encompasses much of the MFE derivatives material, but with a lot of corporate finance added. Roughly speaking, 50% of IFM is about *derivatives* (Topics 6 to 10) and the other 50% is about *corporate finance and investment* (Topics 1 to 5). There are two released MFE past exams (Spring 2007 and Spring 2009), 60 sample questions on introductory derivatives, 40 sample questions on advanced derivatives, and 44 questions on finance and investment, all with detailed solutions. More information about Exam IFM can be found at <https://www.soa.org/education/exam-req/edu-exam-ifm-detail.aspx>.

Exam IFM is offered three times every year (in March, July, and November). In 2020, Exam IFM will be offered via computer-based testing (CBT) from March 13 to March 19, **July 7 to July 13**, and November 24 to November 30. The registration deadlines are February 11, June 9, and October 27, respectively (please refer to <https://www.soa.org/education/exam-req/exam-day-info/edu-2020-cbt-test-schedule/>). It is strongly suggested that you take the exam in **July** shortly after you learn the material, do the homework, and study for the quizzes and exams in this course (as the old saying goes, *strike while the iron is hot!*). The bottom line is:

You should aim to have three professional exams under your belt, namely, P, FM, and IFM, before the Career Fair in early October in order to be a competitive candidate seeking a permanent actuarial job.

Note that because of time constraints, this course is dedicated to the *derivatives portion* (i.e., Topics 6 to 10) of the IFM exam syllabus. To help you learn the *corporate finance and investment portion* (i.e., Topics 1 to 5), it is strongly suggested that you also take **ACTS:4010 (Actuarial Exam IFM Preparation)** and **FIN:3300 (Corporate Finance)**. The reasons are two-fold:

1. ACTS:4010 covers Topics 1, 2, and 4 of the corporate finance and investment portion, while FIN:3300 covers Topics 3 and 5 (and part of Topics 1 and 2), although FIN:3300 may not use the same corporate finance text as that in the IFM exam syllabus.
2. Getting a B- or above in FIN:3300 and an approved accounting course allows you to receive the VEE credit in Accounting and Finance. In other words, you have to take FIN:3300 no matter for IFM exam preparation or for fulfilling the VEE credit.

## 4 Texts

The required textbook for this course is

*Derivative Pricing: A Problem-Based Primer*, 2018, by **A. Lo** (yours truly), Chapman & Hall/CRC Press Financial Mathematics Series, ISBN: 978-1-13803-335-1.

All registered students in this course are expected to purchase this text, which not only addresses all important topics required in the derivatives portion of Exam IFM, but also presents lots of intuition for you to understand the subject matter deeply, and a wide variety of examples and practice problems for exam preparation (note that the textbook has full solutions to all odd-numbered end-of-chapter problems; see Appendix B therein). Homework problems will be assigned from the text. During lectures, the instructor will provide a framework, cover the main ideas, point out subtleties, and go over representative examples with you. You should put down additional details, work out examples together with the instructor, and take supplementary notes to better understand concepts. *You are strongly encouraged to read ahead and bring the book to class.*

An optional text for this course is

*Derivatives Markets* (Third Edition), 2013, by R.L. McDonald, Pearson Education, ISBN: 978-0-32154-308-0.

This is the official textbook for the derivatives portion of Exam IFM. Our textbook, Lo (2018), covers the following required sections in McDonald (2013) in a different but more cohesive order:

- Chapter 1: Introduction to Derivatives, Sections 1, 2, 4, 5
- Chapter 2: An Introduction to Forwards and Options, Sections 1-4
- Chapter 3: Insurance, Collars, and Other Strategies, Sections 1-4
- Chapter 5: Financial Forwards and Futures, Sections 1, 2, 3 (through the middle of p. 136), 4 (through the top of p. 143)
- Chapter 9: Parity and Other Option Relationships, Sections 1 (through the bottom of p. 269), 3
- Chapter 10: Binomial Option Pricing (Basic Concepts), Sections 1-5, 6 (through the middle of p. 315)
- Chapter 11: Binomial Option Pricing (Selected Topics), Section 1
- Chapter 12: The Black-Scholes Formula, Sections 1-3, Appendices A, B
- Chapter 13: Market-Making and Delta-Hedging, Sections 1-4, 5 (beginning at the bottom of p. 398), 6
- Chapter 14: Exotic Options: I, Sections 1, 2 (through the bottom of p. 413), 3 (through the bottom of p. 416), 4 (through the bottom of p. 419), 5 (through Figure 14.4 on p. 423), 6, Exercises 14.20 and 14.21 on p. 429
- Chapter 18: The Lognormal Distribution, Sections 1-4

- Appendices A (The Greek Alphabet), B.1 (The Language of Interest Rates), and C (Jensen's Inequality)

Unless otherwise stated, chapter appendices are not included in the required readings. Pearson has published *Student Solutions Manual to Derivatives Markets*, which provides solutions to all even-numbered end-of-chapter problems in McDonald (2013).

## 5 Grading System

Assessment in this course comprises the following items:

- **Attendance and Attitude:  $\pm\epsilon\%$ <sup>i</sup>**

You may choose to attend or not to attend classes, but everyone needs to be aware that unexcused absence from classes can adversely affect your final grade. It is also impossible for absentees to get a copy of the course material they miss, inquire about the announcements made in class, or seek out-of-class help from the instructor. Likewise, your participation, preparedness, and work ethic may affect your final grade (positively or negatively).

- **Homework Assignments: 20%**

There will be weekly homework assignments consisting of 4 to 6 end-of-chapter problems in the textbook, usually assigned on Friday and due the next Friday. Refer to the course schedule on pages 7 and 8. Any exceptions will be announced in class or on ICON (<http://icon.uiowa.edu>). These assignments will be central to consolidating your understanding of the course materials and are an integral part of this course. Late homework will be severely penalized (see the generic assignment instructions on ICON). For students' guidance, illustrative solutions will be posted on ICON shortly after each homework is due.

*A note on collaboration:* If you have finished all homework problems in their entirety, you may then work with a fellow student to compare methods, answers, etc., but keep in mind that you need to write up your own solutions.

- **Short Quizzes: 20%**

There will be a total of seven 15-minute quizzes held on Mondays. These quizzes are intended to motivate you to study regularly (not just cram before the Midterm and Final Exams!) and will consist of relatively straightforward questions. The quiz with the lowest score will be dropped when it comes to computing the final grade; accordingly, missed quizzes due to illness cannot be made up under any circumstances.

- **Midterm Examination: 25%**

There will be a 90-minute Midterm Examination to be held in the evening (6:30 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.) of **March 27, 2020 (Friday)** at 40 SH testing the material in Chapters 1 to 5 of this course. It will consist of multiple-choice questions similar in style to MFE/IFM problems and end-of-chapter problems in the textbook. You will therefore find that problems from released MFE/IFM past/sample exams and the textbook are useful in preparing for the Midterm Exam.

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<sup>i</sup>In mathematics,  $\epsilon$  usually denotes a small positive number.

- **Final Examination: 35%**

A two-hour comprehensive Final Examination will take place in the week of May 11–15, 2020. Like the Midterm Exam, the Final Exam will comprise multiple-choice questions similar in style to MFE/IFM problems and end-of-chapter problems in the textbook. The exact date and time will be announced by the Registrar in mid-February. Please do not plan your end-of-semester travel plans until the final exam schedule is made public. It is your responsibility to know the date, time, and place of the Final Exam.

All quizzes and exams in this course are closed-book. The IFM formulas and tables (posted on ICON) will be provided if needed, and you are not allowed to bring your own formula sheets (the same applies to the real IFM exam as well!). Only calculators listed on Point 9 of the SOA exam rules and regulations/instructions are permitted (see <https://www.soa.org/Files/Edu/edu-rules-reg-instructions.pdf>).

**A note on absences from exams.** If, because of illness, you are unable to take any exams in this course as scheduled, you should inform the course instructor *within 24 hours* after the exam has ended and explain why you are medically unfit to take the exam on the scheduled date. Otherwise, a zero score will be awarded. Approval for absences for other reasons such as mandatory religious obligations, certain University activities, or unavoidable circumstances should be sought well in advance with documentation provided.

**Grading scheme.** Plus/minus grades will be given in this course, and undergraduate and graduate students will be treated as two separate groups when it comes to assigning final grades. An *approximate* guide is as follows:

Undergraduate students		
A- [85, 90)	A [90, 95)	A+ [95, 100]
B- [70, 75)	B [75, 80)	B+ [80, 85)
C- [55, 60)	C [60, 65)	C+ [65, 70)
D- [40, 45)	D [45, 50)	D+ [50, 55)
F [0, 40)		

Graduate students		
A- [86.5, 91)	A [91, 95.5)	A+ [95.5, 100]
B- [73, 77.5)	B [77.5, 82)	B+ [82, 86.5)
C- [59.5, 64)	C [64, 68.5)	C+ [68.5, 73)
D- [46, 50.5)	D [50.5, 55)	D+ [55, 59.5)
F [0, 46)		

These are not completely absolute scales and the instructor reserves the “option” to adjust the cutoffs, depending on the difficulty of the exams. Note that with this grading scheme you are not “graded on a curve,” and so you are not competing with fellow students. Therefore, you are not penalized in any way for working together to better understand concepts and to perform better in this course.

**IMPORTANT NOTE**

This is *not* an easy course for most students, even if you have prior exposure to option pricing. Each week you should spend about 3 to 6 hours outside of class meetings reviewing/previewing the textbook and working on the end-of-chapter problems independently. It is fine to work harder, but working less is risky. Let me know if you encounter any problems with your learning.

## 6 Tentative Teaching, Assignment, and Quiz Schedule

This tentative schedule may be updated as the semester unfolds.

Teaching Week	Lecture	Date	Topic (Refer to Lo (2018))
<b>Part I. Conceptual Foundation on Derivatives</b>			
1	—	January 20, 2020 (Mon)	(University Holiday)
	1	January 22, 2020 (Wed)	Introduction and Chapter 1
	2	January 24, 2020 (Fri)	Chapter 2, <b>Assignment 1</b>
2	3	January 27, 2020 (Mon)	Chapter 2, <b>Quiz 1</b>
	4	January 29, 2020 (Wed)	Chapter 2
	5	January 31, 2020 (Fri)	Chapter 2, <b>Assignment 2</b>
3	6	February 3, 2020 (Mon)	Chapter 2
	7	February 5, 2020 (Wed)	Chapter 3
	8	February 7, 2020 (Fri)	Chapter 3, <b>Assignment 3</b>
4	9	February 10, 2020 (Mon)	Chapter 3, <b>Quiz 2</b>
	10	February 12, 2020 (Wed)	Chapter 3
	11	February 14, 2020 (Fri)	Chapter 3, <b>Assignment 4</b>
5	12	February 17, 2020 (Mon)	Chapter 3
	13	February 19, 2020 (Wed)	Chapter 3
	14	February 21, 2020 (Fri)	Chapter 3, <b>Assignment 5</b>
<b>Part II-A. Discrete-time Option Pricing Models</b>			
6	15	February 24, 2020 (Mon)	(Out of town) <b>Quiz 3</b>
	16	February 26, 2020 (Wed)	Chapter 4
	17	February 28, 2020 (Fri)	Chapter 4, <b>Assignment 6</b>
7	18	March 2, 2020 (Mon)	Chapter 4
	19	March 4, 2020 (Wed)	Chapter 4
	20	March 6, 2020 (Fri)	Chapter 4, <b>Assignment 7</b>
<b>Part II-B. Continuous-time Option Pricing Models</b>			
8	21	March 9, 2020 (Mon)	Chapter 5, <b>Quiz 4</b>
	22	March 11, 2020 (Wed)	Chapter 5
	23	March 13, 2020 (Fri)	Chapter 5, <b>Assignment 8</b>
—	—	March 16, 2020 (Mon)	(Spring Break—No class!)
	—	March 18, 2020 (Wed)	
	—	March 20, 2020 (Fri)	
9	24	March 23, 2020 (Mon)	Chapter 6, <b>Assignment 9</b>
	25	March 25, 2020 (Wed)	Chapter 6
	—	March 27, 2020 (Fri)	<b>(No class. Midterm in evening!)</b>
10	26	March 30, 2020 (Mon)	Chapter 6
	27	April 1, 2020 (Wed)	Chapter 6
	28	April 3, 2020 (Fri)	Chapter 6, <b>Assignment 10</b>
11	29	April 6, 2020 (Mon) <sup>ii</sup>	Chapter 6, <b>Quiz 5</b>
	30	April 8, 2020 (Wed)	Chapter 7
	31	April 10, 2020 (Fri)	Chapter 7, <b>Assignment 11</b>

<sup>ii</sup>Drop date for undergraduate students

12	32	April 13, 2020 (Mon)	Chapter 7, <b>Quiz 6</b>
	33	April 15, 2020 (Wed)	Chapter 8
	34	April 17, 2020 (Fri)	Chapter 8, <b>Assignment 12</b>
13	35	April 20, 2020 (Mon)	Chapter 8
	36	April 22, 2020 (Wed)	Chapter 8
	37	April 24, 2020 (Fri)	Chapter 8, <b>Assignment 13</b>
14	38	April 27, 2020 (Mon)	Chapter 8, <b>Quiz 7</b>
	39	April 29, 2020 (Wed)	Chapter 8
	40	May 1, 2020 (Fri)	Chapter 8, <b>Assignment 14</b>
<b>Part III. Epilogue: General Properties of Option Prices</b>			
15	41	May 4, 2020 (Mon)	Chapter 9
	42	May 6, 2020 (Wed)	Chapter 9
	43	May 8, 2020 (Fri)	Chapter 9 and Final Review
—	—	May 11–15, 2020	<b>Final Examination</b>
⋮	⋮	⋮	⋮
—	—	July 7–13, 2020	<b>July 2020 Exam IFM</b>

## More about the Instructor (“Shameless” self-introduction...)

Professor Ambrose Lo is currently Associate Professor of Actuarial Science with tenure at the Department of Statistics and Actuarial Science, The University of Iowa. He earned his B.S. in Actuarial Science (first class honors) and Ph.D. in Actuarial Science from The University of Hong Kong in 2010 and 2014 respectively. He joined The University of Iowa in August 2014 as an Assistant Professor of Actuarial Science. He is a Fellow of the Society of Actuaries (FSA) and a Chartered Enterprise Risk Analyst (CERA). His research interests lie in dependence structures, quantitative risk management as well as optimal (re)insurance. His research papers have been published in top-tier actuarial journals, such as *ASTIN Bulletin: The Journal of the International Actuarial Association*, *Insurance: Mathematics and Economics*, and *Scandinavian Actuarial Journal*.

Besides dedicating himself to actuarial research, Ambrose attaches equal importance to teaching, through which he nurtures the next generation of actuaries and serves the actuarial profession. He has taught courses on financial derivatives, mathematical finance, life contingencies, credibility theory, advanced probability theory, and regression and time series analysis. His emphasis in teaching is always placed on the development of a thorough understanding of the subject matter complemented by concrete problem-solving skills. Besides coauthoring the *ACTEX Study Manual for SOA Exam SRM* (Spring 2020 Edition), he is also the sole author of the *ACTEX Study Manual for CAS Exam MAS-I* (Spring 2020 Edition), *ACTEX Study Manual for SOA Exam PA* (Spring 2020 Edition), and the textbook *Derivative Pricing: A Problem-Based Primer* (2018) published by Chapman & Hall/CRC Press.

# College of Liberal Arts & Sciences: Policies and Procedures

**Absences and Attendance** Students are responsible for attending class and for contributing to the learning environment of a course. Students are also responsible for knowing their course absence policies, which will vary by instructor. All absence policies, however, must uphold the UI policy related to student illness, mandatory religious obligations, including Holy Day obligations, unavoidable circumstances, or University authorized activities (<https://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook/attendance-absences>). Students may use this absence form to aid communication; the instructor will decide if the absence is excused or unexcused (<https://clas.uiowa.edu/sites/default/files/ABSENCE%20EXPLANATION%20FORM2019.pdf>).

**Academic Integrity** All undergraduates enrolled in courses offered by CLAS have, in essence, agreed to the College's Code of Academic Honesty. Misconduct is reported to the College, resulting in suspension or other sanctions, with sanctions communicated with the student through the UI email address (<https://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook/academic-fraud-honor-code>).

**Accommodations for Disabilities** UI is committed to an educational experience that is accessible to all students. A student may request academic accommodations for a disability (such as mental health, attention, learning, vision, and physical or health-related condition) by registering with Student Disability Services (SDS). The student is then responsible for discussing specific accommodations with the instructor. More information is at <https://sds.studentlife.uiowa.edu/>.

**Administrative Home of the Course** The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS) is the administrative home of this course and governs its add/drop deadlines, the second-grade-only option, and related policies. Other colleges may have different policies. CLAS policies may be found here: <https://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook>.

**Communication and the Required Use of UI Email** Students are responsible for official correspondences sent to their UI email address (uiowa.edu) and must use this address for all communication within UI (Operations Manual, III.15.2).

**Complaints** Students with a complaint about an academic issue should first visit with the instructor or course supervisor and then with the Chair of the department or program offering the course; students may next bring the issue to the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. For more information, see

<https://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook/student-rights-responsibilities>.

**Final Examination Policies** The final exam schedule is announced around the fifth week of classes; students are responsible for knowing the date, time, and place of a final exam. Students should not make travel plans until knowing this information. No exams of any kind are allowed the week before finals. Visit

<https://registrar.uiowa.edu/final-examination-scheduling-policies>.

**Nondiscrimination in the Classroom** UI is committed to making the classroom a respectful and inclusive space for all people irrespective of their gender, sexual, racial, religious or other identities. Toward this goal, students are invited to optionally share their preferred names and pronouns with their instructors and classmates. The University of Iowa prohibits discrimination and harassment against individuals on the basis of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, and other identity categories set forth in the University's Human Rights policy. For more information, contact the Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity ([diversity.uiowa.edu](https://diversity.uiowa.edu)).

**Sexual Harassment** Sexual harassment subverts the mission of the University and threatens the well-being of students, faculty, and staff. All members of the UI community must uphold the UI mission and contribute to a safe environment that enhances learning. Incidents of sexual harassment must be reported immediately. For assistance, please see <https://osmrc.uiowa.edu/>.

**\*\*END OF COURSE SYLLABUS\*\***