Columbia University
Graduate School of Business

(Tentative spring 2018 syllabus: All information below is subject to change**)**

Advanced Investment Research

Course Description and Outline:

Professor:
Kian Ghazi
Email: kg2531@columbia.edu

There are no official office hours. However, Professor Ghazi is easily accessible via email between class sessions.

Course Overview:

This will be a demanding class meant for the student who is intent on entering the investment management industry post-graduation. As such, only students who demonstrate a compelling interest in professional investment management will be admitted, and admission will be limited to 10 students to ensure quality of experience for all involved. This seminar is not open to the bidding process and no auditors will be allowed.

The purpose of this section of Advanced Investment Research is to help students learn how to "rip apart" a company and draw thoughtful conclusions about whether it might make for a good investment opportunity. Topics will include stock selection, identifying the key investment factors, developing a variant view, and networking with industry contacts to help confirm or refute one's thesis. The class will culminate with students delivering a detailed research recommendation on a single investment idea to a panel of judges. The goal is for students to leave class with an actionable investment idea and a framework for how to develop and research ideas in the future.

This class will be demanding and potentially overwhelming if you are not prepared to dedicate significant time and energy to it. Students should expect 20-25 hours of work per week outside of class, and the work load may be higher if you have not previously done detailed fundamental investment research. We recommend that you do not take this class if you are unable to put in this amount of time because you will not be able to keep up, and you will not be happy with your

final grade. Note: this class will also include a substantial pre-class assignment which will be a material part of the final grade.

Class Structure:

Investment management is not a subject that is optimally learned via lecture and passive response. Advanced Investment Research has been designed with this reality in mind. Class discussion will be driven by the work that you and your classmates do on weekly assignments. As such, we view 20-25 hours as the minimum weekly commitment to meet the course goals, and we recognize depending on your background that more may be required. The assignments will require significant research effort plus creativity and business judgment. We also hope they will be enjoyable and valuable learning experiences.

The first half of this course will build a framework to combine publicly available information and sound business judgment to decide whether a particular security is worth extensive research. Students will use an analytical tool called a "Combat Pack" to evaluate an assigned company each week. The goal at this stage is to identify the drivers of the business, why a potential mispricing may exist, and the critical research necessary to prove out the investment thesis.

In the second half of the course, students will select one company (from a provided list) on which they will conduct deep research, culminating in an investment recommendation and stock pitch to a panel of industry veterans who will act as PMs/judges.

Agenda:

- Class 1 – Course Overview & Syllabus
- Class 2 – Barriers to Entry and Business Quality
- Class 3 – Valuation Framework
- Class 4 – Stock Selection
- Class 5 – How to Interview Management
- Class 6 – Guest Lecture: CFO
- Class 7 – Guest Lecture: PM
- Class 8 – Value Added Research (VAR)
- Class 9 – Thoughtful Analytical Work as the Basis for a Variant View
- Class 10 – Initial Research Project Learnings / Presentations
- Class 11 – Investment Mistakes Case Study
- Class 12 – Final Presentations

Class Assignment Descriptions

Type	Designation	Discussion of concepts	Preparation of submission	Grade
A	group/group	Permitted with designated group*	By the group	Same grade for each member of group
B	group/individual	Permitted with designated group*	Individually (No sharing of any portion of the submission)	Individual
C	individual/individual	None of any kind	Individually	Individual
D	(An optional additional category to be defined in detail by the individual faculty member).			

All assignments will be type B (group/individual)

Pre-Class Assignment:

- Read The Curse of the Mogul, Chapters 1-5. Write a 1-2 page response summarizing your thoughts on business quality and competitive advantage.
- Complete your first Combat Pack.

Pre-class assignments are due by midnight on **Wednesday, January 25th at noon.** All assignments should be submitted electronically to the relevant folder in Canvas. Late assignments will not be accepted.

Feedback will be given via in-class interaction. Class sessions will discuss the assignments in detail, including references to specific portions of your individual submissions. Additional feedback is available through post class interactions with the Professor and TA.

Weekly Assignments:

The most time intensive assignments are the combat packs, and students will prepare one per week for the first half of the semester. Additional assignments for submission will be given on a weekly basis. All assignments must be submitted by **Sunday at noon**, to allow the Professor time to review the work before class.

By Monday at noon, we will distribute one of the better/best combat packs completed by your classmates. You'll be expected to have read this combat pack thoroughly before class, as you will be responsible for the content (this is also another valuable source of feedback). We expect a lively classroom discussion, and your familiarity with the materials will enhance the class for you and for your classmates. Note: it may take 45 minutes or longer to digest a combat pack, so plan your schedule accordingly.

Course Materials:

The Curse of the Mogul, Bruce Greenwald.
SEC filings, conference call transcripts and other reading for your assigned companies.

Grades:

Grades will reflect knowledge and application of the course material and communication skills. This course is intended to be interactive and class participation will be crucial to the success of this class.

Grades will be calculated as follows:

40% Weekly Assignments (Individual)
20% Class Participation
40% Final Project (Individual)