

FIN 6930 Capitalism

Course Objective: This course introduces the concept of capitalism, traces its evolution and examines its role in a modern free market economy. The emphasis here is on practical applications found in the securities markets; on government's interaction with the business community; and on business interaction with society. Students interested in theory will pursue its study outside of the class room.

Case Study: The Case Study will examine the circumstances under which the Bank of America Corp. ("BAC"), an investor-owned financial services conglomerate, committed to purchase Merrill Lynch, itself an investor-owned financial services conglomerate, on a Saturday morning in September 2008. During the period under examination, BAC management and the board of directors had to cope with frequent and unpredictable revelations of the continued deterioration of the U.S. economy; the savage destruction of the business models of some of the largest Wall Street firms (commercial banks, investment banks and combinations of both disciplines); and an emotionally charged political environment.

Two students selected by lottery will prepare the case for their classmates. Outside speakers with distinguished Wall Street business careers will come to the campus to enhance the case learning experience during its presentation in the last class meeting.

Prerequisite: MSF students only.

Textbook: There is no course-specific textbook. While reading the texts, articles and other material mentioned in the syllabus will add to the overall experience of this course, students should know that certain of these references (*Atlas Shrugged* for example) are quite lengthy. Enrolling students should, however, come to class prepared to participate actively: question the lecturer, air opposing views and debate classmates...this course is not a series of passive lectures. Instead it relies on the Socratic Method to identify, examine and question the fundamental principles and institutions of capitalism.