

**Stan Ross Department of Accountancy  
Zicklin School of Business, Baruch College  
City University of New York**

**ACCT 81200 -- Empirical Research Methods  
Fall 2020**

Instructor: Prof. Kalin Kolev  
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Day/Time: Wed. 2:15 pm – 4:15 pm.  
Office Hours: by appointment

**Course overview:**

The course is intended as a survey of contemporary empirical archival accounting research. The aim is to provide a high-level view of the literature and foster an ability to evaluate research critically, with the ultimate objective of helping you conduct your own research.

**Course format:**

We will conduct the course in a seminar format. Specifically, each time we meet, a member of the class will take the role of a moderator, presenting the key implications of the papers for the session. The rest of the class (including the instructor) will act as attentive audience, asking questions and making relevant comments and suggestions. The student who serves as a moderator will provide a written summary of the key points and takeaways from the presented papers for the respective session. These summaries are not to exceed a single-space page per paper and will be shared with the other members of the class. These summaries will help you in preparing for the comprehensive exam (if you have not taken it yet) and future research, so do not think of it as busy-work.

Some of the sessions may be moderated by guest speakers. When this happens, the structure of the session and reading list for the respective class most likely will change. Nevertheless, I expect everyone to be familiar with the materials for the session and participate in a constructive manner.

Although the reading list for each class is limited to three papers emphasizing contemporary research, I **very strongly** encourage you to engage in an independent review, familiarizing yourself with the studies that provide the backbone for the respective literature. I do not provide a list of (what I consider to be) the fundamental studies for each topic because I believe there is great value in forming an independent opinion on the origins, evolution, and future of a literature. Please note that when selecting the papers that serve as a base for the classes, I cast a wide net, aiming for an active discussion each time we meet.

## Implications of the COVID-19 pandemic

The Accounting seminar series are intended for in-person delivery. The COVID-19 pandemic and resultant challenges in mind, this term we will adopt a distance-learning model for the course. Rest assured the objectives, structure, and deliverables for the course are not affected by the format modification this semester.

Considering the course objectives, the delivery will be synchronous. Acknowledging its growing popularity among the Baruch community, I plan on using Zoom as the main synchronous communication interface for the course. To accommodate technical challenges, I will look into options for recording the sessions and making them available for viewing among the class members for one calendar week after the respective class. If, for any reason, you are uncomfortable with having the sessions recorded, please let me know by e-mail no later than **noon Eastern August 26<sup>th</sup>**. I will treat the absence of such e-mails and this syllabus as an explicit agreement to the record-and-temporary-share approach described above.

## Course project:

Developing an appreciation for the importance and limitations of a specific literature is an important step to identifying viable research questions. As such, the course project comprises a detailed literature review on a topic of your choosing. Although I do not expect a manuscript ready to be published by *Foundations and Trends® in Accounting*, the write-up should be detailed enough to inform a reader on the extant findings in the area and what remains to be done. The write-ups will be shared with all members of the class and you will present the main conclusions, including a brief research proposal for a study based on a gap in the literature you identify in preparing your review, during the last two class sessions.

## Course grade:

The course grade comprises:

Written summaries of moderated papers	10%
Class participation (as a moderator and as an audience member)	40%
Referee reports (two)	10%
Written literature review and proposal	30%
Presentation of the literature review and proposal	10%
Total:	100%

We will discuss the specifics of each deliverable during our first class meeting and will revisit as needed throughout the semester. *Please reach out to me **as early as possible** if you have difficulties with any of the papers or assignments!!!*

**Course schedule (tentative & likely to change):**

<b>Class</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Moderator</b>
1	Aug. 26	Course overview / “lay of the land”	KSK
2	Sept. 2	Measurement	KSK
3	Sept. 9	Information transfer / externalities	Wen / Yanru
4	Sept. 16	Fair value – mark-to-model	Yanru
5	Sept. 23	Information redaction	Huy
6	Sept. 30	Culture	Tamara
7	Oct. 7	Non-GAAP earnings	Huy
	<b><i>Oct. 14</i></b>	<b><i>No class</i></b>	
8	Oct. 21	Risk	Wen
9	Oct. 28	Non-financial metrics	Tamara
10	Nov. 4	CSR / ESG	Dana
11	Nov. 11	Cyber security	Jose
12	Nov. 18	<i>Guest speaker place-holder</i>	
	<b><i>Nov. 25</i></b>	<b><i>No class</i></b>	
<b>13</b>	<b>Dec. 2</b>	<b>Presentations</b>	
<b>14</b>	<b>Dec. 9</b>	<b>Presentations</b>	

**Session details and discussion papers (tentative & likely to change):**

**Class 1 (Aug. 26):**

We will open with a brief introduction, focusing, among others, on the research interests and current projects of each member of the class. Next, we will discuss the logistics for the course and the moderator roles for the subsequent meetings. The rest of the class discussion will focus on issues pertaining to the identification of viable research questions and managing the life cycle of a project.

**Class 2 (Sept. 2):**

We will dedicate the class to discussing approaches to developing empirical constructs. The topic is very large in scale and scope, so please do not feel restrained by the reading list I suggest (this hold for each of the other class meetings)! As noted on the schedule, I will lead this session; however, I expect you will take an active part in the discussion.

*Discussion papers:*

Basu, S., Vitanza, J. and Wang, W., 2020. Asymmetric Loan Loss Provisioning. *Available at SSRN 3349530*.

Cain, C.A., Kolev, K.S. and McVay, S., 2020. Detecting opportunistic special items. *Management Science*, 66(5), pp.2099-2119.

Demerjian, P., Lev, B. and McVay, S., 2012. Quantifying managerial ability: A new measure and validity tests. *Management science*, 58(7), pp.1229-1248.

**Class 3 (Sept. 9):**

The conversation will center on how the actions of one economic entity affect its counterparts. Among others, the discussion will touch upon the role of intermediaries, economic linkage, and implications for statement users.

*Discussion papers:*

Brochet, F., Kolev, K. and Lerman, A., 2018. Information transfer and conference calls. *Review of Accounting Studies*, 23(3), pp.907-957.

Hann, R.N., Kim, H. and Zheng, Y., 2019. Intra-industry information transfers: evidence from changes in implied volatility around earnings announcements. *Review of Accounting Studies*, 24(3), pp.927-971.

Li, V. 2016, Do false financial statements distort peer firms' decisions? *The Accounting Review* 91(1), pp. 251-278.

**Class 4 (Sept. 16):**

We will discuss internally generated fair value estimates.

*Discussion papers:*

Altamuro, J. and Zhang, H., 2013. The financial reporting of fair value based on managerial inputs versus market inputs: evidence from mortgage servicing rights. *Review of Accounting Studies*, 18(3), pp.833-858.

Hanley, K.W., Jagolinzer, A.D. and Nikolova, S., 2018. Strategic estimation of asset fair values. *Journal of Accounting and Economics*.

Iselin, M. and Nicoletti, A., 2017. The effects of SFAS 157 disclosures on investment decisions. *Journal of Accounting and Economics*, 63(2-3), pp.404-427.

**Class 5 (Sept. 23):**

The conversation will touch upon the implications of a firm's choice not to disclose information mandated by extant rules and regulations.

*Discussion papers:*

Coleman, B., Merkley, K.J., Miller, B.P. and Pacelli, J., 2020. Does FOIA Foil the SEC's Intent to Keep Investigations Confidential? *Management Science*, *Forthcoming*.

Glaeser, S., 2018. The effects of proprietary information on corporate disclosure and transparency: Evidence from trade secrets. *Journal of Accounting and Economics*, 66(1), pp.163-193.

Kolev, K., Lee, D., Neamtiu, M. 2020. The impact of redacting information from SEC filings on the SEC monitoring process. *Working paper*.

**Class 6 (Sept. 30):**

We will consider the implications of personal and corporate traits on financial accounting and reporting.

*Discussion papers:*

Abdel-Meguid, A.M., Jennings, J., Olsen, K.J. and Soliman, M.T. The Impact of the CEO's Personal Narcissism on Non-GAAP Earnings. *The Accounting Review*, forthcoming.

Dikolli, S.S., Keusch, T., Mayew, W.J. and Steffen, T.D., 2020. CEO behavioral integrity, auditor responses, and firm outcomes. *The Accounting Review*, 95(2), pp.61-88.

Pacelli, J., 2019. Corporate culture and analyst catering. *Journal of Accounting and Economics*, 67(1), pp.120-143.

**Class 7 (Oct. 7):**

We will consider aspects pertaining to the why, what, and how of non-GAAP reporting.

*Discussion papers:*

Bradshaw, M.T., Christensen, T.E., Gee, K.H. and Whipple, B.C., 2018. Analysts' GAAP earnings forecasts and their implications for accounting research. *Journal of Accounting and Economics*.

Doyle, J.T., Jennings, J.N. and Soliman, M.T., 2013. Do managers define non-GAAP earnings to meet or beat analyst forecasts?. *Journal of Accounting and Economics*, 56(1), pp.40-56.

Kyung, H., Lee, H. and Marquardt, C., 2019. The effect of voluntary clawback adoption on non-GAAP reporting. *Journal of Accounting and Economics*, 67(1), pp.175-201.

**Class 8 (Oct. 21):**

The aim of the class is to offer a (gentle) introduction to the notion of risk, its various manifestations, and ramifications.

*Discussion papers:*

Bova, F., Kolev, K., Thomas, J.K. and Zhang, X.F., 2015. Non-executive employee ownership and corporate risk. *The Accounting Review*, 90(1), pp.115-145.

Heflin, F., Kolev, K.S. and Whipple, B.C., 2020. The risk-relevance of street earnings. *Working paper*.

Kim, J.B., Li, L., Lu, L.Y. and Yu, Y., 2016. Financial statement comparability and expected crash risk. *Journal of Accounting and Economics*, 61(2-3), pp.294-312.

**Class 9 (Oct. 28):**

The discussion will focus on the role of non-financial metrics in financial reporting.

*Discussion papers:*

Badia, M., Barth, M.E., Duro, M. and Ormazabal, G., 2020. Firm Risk and Disclosures about Dispersion of Asset Values: Evidence from Oil and Gas Reserves. *The Accounting Review*, 95(1), pp.1-29.

Bonacchi, M., Kolev, K. and Lev, B., 2015. Customer franchise—A hidden, yet crucial, asset. *Contemporary Accounting Research*, 32(3), pp.1024-1049.

Brazel, J.F., Jones, K.L. and Zimbelman, M.F., 2009. Using nonfinancial measures to assess fraud risk. *Journal of Accounting Research*, 47(5), pp.1135-1166.

**Class 10 (Nov. 4):**

The main objective of the class is to spark conversation on why public firms undertake projects that do not necessarily (appear to) align with their focus and expertise, and the effect of these activities.

*Discussion papers:*

Demers, E., Hendrikse, J., Joos, P. and Lev, B., 2020. ESG Didn't Immunize Stocks Against the Covid-19 Market Crash. *Available at SSRN 3675920*.

Dhaliwal, D.S., Radhakrishnan, S., Tsang, A. and Yang, Y.G., 2012. Nonfinancial disclosure and analyst forecast accuracy: International evidence on corporate social responsibility disclosure. *The Accounting Review*, 87(3), pp.723-759.

Lev, B., Petrovits, C. and Radhakrishnan, S., 2010. Is doing good good for you? How corporate charitable contributions enhance revenue growth. *Strategic Management Journal*, 31(2), pp.182-200.

**Class 11 (Nov. 11):**

The intended purpose of the class is to start a discussion on how different disciplines interact with accounting research, with the hope of seeding innovative research questions in innovative (repetition intended) settings.

*Discussion papers:*

Amir, E., Levi, S. and Livne, T., 2018. Do firms underreport information on cyber-attacks? Evidence from capital markets. *Review of Accounting Studies*, pp.1-30.

Haislip, J., Kolev, K., Pinsker, R. and Steffen, T., 2020. The Economic Impact of Cybersecurity Breaches: An Information Spillover Perspective. *Working paper*.

Hilary, G., Segal, B. and Zhang, M.H., 2016. Cyber-Risk Disclosure: Who Cares?. *Working paper*.

**Class 12 (Nov. 18):**

As indicated on the course schedule, this is a placeholder for a guest speaker. I will let you know as soon as they confirm and will update the syllabus with the date, reading list, etc.