Epidemics, Natural Disasters, and Geopolitics: Managing Global Business and Financial Uncertainty

Q4 Spring 2020
Wednesdays 4:30-7:30
0.5 credit units
Letter grade or pass/fail
Instructor of record:
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Epidemics and natural disasters are exogenous shocks that create many challenges for companies, financial markets, and political systems. This class draws on the expertise of Wharton faculty members to provide a deep understanding of how global business and financial uncertainty can be managed in the wake of such dramatic events. The topics include: leading in uncertain times, the reaction of the financial markets to the coronavirus, disaster risk and asset returns, the significance of borders in an integrated world, emotional contagion and epidemics, the evolving U.S./China relationship in the context of trade wars and the pandemic, telework, and the disruption of trade and global supply chains. Students may take this class in person or online.

Grading criteria:

Students can choose letter grade or pass/fail.

NOTE: All deadlines are Eastern Standard Time.

We encourage students to follow the class live through streaming every Wednesday 4:30-7:20 pm. If you can’t do so, you have until 11:59 pm of the following Saturday to watch the recordings and submit the two (2) weekly assignments (see below).

In addition, I will post two or three 10-minute videos each week with experts specifically recorded for this class.

All classes will be online:
• 30% Class participation. You can make contributions to the discussion group on canvas in order to get credit for class participation. One instance of participation per week is appropriate. Discussion comments must (1) be a maximum of 150 words, (2) be relevant to the discussion thread (if created in response to another comment), and (3) refer to the material covered in the week’s lecture or readings. Deadline: 11:59 pm of the Saturday following the Wednesday class. The grading scale is: 1 = irrelevant comment, 3 = good comment, 5 = excellent comment. No points if no comment is submitted.

• 30% Multiple-choice tests at the end of each class. You will have 15 minutes to complete the test after you click on it on Canvas. Deadline: 11:59 pm of the Saturday after the Wednesday class.

• 30% Final paper. This is a team paper of about 1,400 words on a topic related to the class, to be graded by peers. Double spaced, on a topic related to the class. Must include title, abstract, main body, conclusion, and references. Teams of 3-4 students will be assigned. Deadline is 11:59 pm on May 6.

• 10% Peer evaluation of one paper submitted by another team. Each student will individually be assigned a paper to evaluate. Deadline is 11:59 pm on May 10. Failure to provide an evaluation will result in no points for this assignment.

Absent Policy:

• We will monitor online if you have followed the class through live streaming or if you watch the recordings of the classes before 11:59 pm of the following Saturday. A 5-point penalty for each Wednesday-class recording missed will be assessed when there is no compliance with this requirement.

• If you are unable to meet the deadline for viewing the lecture and complete the corresponding and discussion, you shall submit a course absence report through the PennInTouch portal, specifying the range of time and reason. Due to the number of students in the course, please refrain from reporting your absence through email or Canvas message. You are still expected to watch the missed course recording and meet other expectation when you resume the capacity to do the coursework.

IMPORTANT NOTE:

If you cannot watch the videos or submit the two (2) weekly assignments by 11:59 pm of Saturday due to a religious holiday, family emergency, or health problem, please email Mauro Guillen (guillen@wharton.upenn.edu) ahead of the deadline. I will respond and enable you to do the assignments for that day of class at a later point.

IMPORTANT DATES:
Add: March 27.
Drop: April 10.
Pass/Fail or Letter Grade: April 17.
Withdrawal: April 24.

Required readings:
• All readings listed on this syllabus are required and must be completed prior to their discussion in class. The weekly tests are likely to ask questions about the readings.
• They are available from our Canvas under each Professor’s folder.

Schedule of Classes

***specific faculty and sequence of topics subject to change***

IMPORTANT:
Watch the introductory video by Mauro Guillén BEFORE March 25

March 25

4:30-5:30
Geoff Garrett
Leading in Uncertain Times

5:30-6:20
Kent Smetters
Budgetary Implications

6:20-7:20
Zeke Emanuel
COVID-19: Evolution of a Pandemic

Readings:
“Pandemics That Changed History.” History (2020).

April 1

4:30-5:30
Changing Behavior for Good in the Face of Disasters
Katherine Milkman

5:30-6:30
Anticipating Risks, Coping with Uncertainty
Howard Kunreuther

6:30-7:30
Uncertainty and Global Supply Chains
John Paul MacDuffie

April 8

4:30-5:50
Global Collisions
Mohamed El-Erian

6:00-7:20
China-U.S. Relations: Trade Wars, National Security and COVID-19
Geoff Garrett

April 15

4:30-5:50
Market Response: Risk, Fundamentals, and Investor Psychology
Jeremy Siegel

6:00-7:20
Emotional Contagion: Epidemics and Human Interactions
Sigal Barsade

Readings:

April 22

4:30-5:50
Telework and Virtual Teams
Martine Haas

6:00-7:20
Responding to Surprises
Barbara Mellers

April 29

4:30-5:50
The Changing Significance of Borders
Beth Simmons

6:00-7:20
From Climate Law to Pandemic Insurance
Carolyn Kousky and Sarah Light

7:20-7:30
Conclusion
Mauro F. Guillén