



MODELING WITH SPREADSHEETS

QMETH 551
WINTER 2025

INSTRUCTOR

Mark Hillier

Class: Section A&B: Mondays & Wednesdays, 10:30–12:20pm in Paccar 394

Section C&D: Mondays, 6:00–9:30pm in Paccar 293

Office Hours (January 6 through March 10):

Sundays 7:30–8:00pm on Zoom (<https://washington.zoom.us/j/92981393435>)

(except holiday weekends and during midterm: Jan 19, Feb 9, Feb 16)

Mondays 5:15–5:45pm in Paccar 465 (except holidays: Jan 20, Feb 17)

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Canvas: <https://canvas.uw.edu/courses/1787783>

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course covers modeling with spreadsheets for analyzing quantitative aspects of business problems. Spreadsheets now have features that allow managers to perform sophisticated quantitative analysis in the comfortable and intuitive environment of the spreadsheet. This gives managers the power of quantitative analysis tools without forcing them to use unfamiliar mathematical notation. Applications from a variety of business areas will be discussed, including finance, marketing, and operations. Sample applications include cash flow problems, portfolio optimization, pricing models, revenue management, municipal bond underwriting, project management, supply chain management, facility location, shortest path and routing, equipment replacement, advertising media selection, and budget-constrained project selection.

RECOMMENDED MATERIALS

Hillier and Hillier, *Introduction to Management Science*, 7th (or 5th or 6th) Edition, McGraw-Hill/Irwin.

Course Packet includes class slides, problem sets, and case studies. Available in paper form from E Z Copy N' Print at 4336 University Way (also available electronically on Canvas).

COURSE PACKET

I have prepared extensive course notes that I use as slides during class. These course notes include examples that we will work together in class and other lecture material. The course notes are not intended as material that you use to prepare for class; my intent is for them to make it easier for you to listen, ask questions, and participate in class, rather than take lots of your own notes during the lectures.

SOFTWARE

Microsoft Excel (including Solver), Solver Table (available on Canvas), and Crystal Ball (see instructions on Canvas). Analytic Solver (demonstrated in pre-class videos under Session 10) is optional. For the Mac, Excel's Solver is somewhat unreliable so a Windows version of Excel (or Analytic Solver) should ideally be used—please read the page on Canvas for Mac Users (available on the Home Page). Excel for Windows and Crystal Ball are also available virtually through a browser (Mac or Windows) utilizing computers in the Paccar Computer Lab. Instructions for this are available on the Canvas Home Page.

DELIVERY METHOD

For most class sessions, there is some material that is best delivered asynchronously (through videos that I will be recording for you)—basically lecture material. Then there is other material that is more interactive (involving more discussion) that is best delivered synchronously, in our live class meeting.

Therefore, I will be dividing up most class sessions as follows:

Before Class: There will sometimes be a video or a set of videos to watch (posted on Canvas) that must be watched *before* the live class session. The live class session will assume that *everyone* has watched these videos. (For the evening section, where two class sessions are combined in one evening, note that there may be two sets of pre-class videos to watch.)

Live Class Session: On scheduled class days, we will meet in person.

After Class: There may be a video or a set of videos to watch (posted on Canvas) that should be watched *after* the live class session.

Having some material covered in recorded videos will allow for a more interactive and more relaxed live class session. Some live class sessions may end before the scheduled ending time. I will hang around the classroom after class to provide individual one-on-one help as needed.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

By being a student in this course you acknowledge that you are a part of a learning community at the Foster School of Business that is committed to the highest academic standards. As a part of this community, you pledge to uphold the fundamental standards of honesty, respect, and integrity, and accept the responsibility to encourage others to adhere to these standards. Furthermore, as part of the Foster MBA program, we have jointly agreed to conform to and uphold the MBA Honor Code.

CHATGPT AND OTHER AI-BASED TOOLS

You are welcome to use AI-based tools to assist in your learning during this course and/or helping you learn any concepts needed for problem sets. However, use of AI-based tools or the internet in general (beyond our class Canvas site) is *not* allowed while completing the midterm and final exam.

GRADING POLICY

The course grade will be based on problem sets, two exams, a student presentation, and class participation, with the following weights:

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|------------------------------------|-----|
| • Problem Sets (individual) | 10% |
| • Problem Sets (team) | 20% |
| • Midterm Exam | 25% |
| • Final Exam | 25% |
| • Student Project and Presentation | 15% |
| • Class Participation | 5% |

PROBLEM SETS

Five graded problem sets will be assigned in order to provide you the opportunity to develop and apply the concepts and tools discussed in class. Modeling with spreadsheets is best learned by doing. Therefore it is critical that every student first attempt to set up and solve each of the problems in the problem set on their own. It is fine (even encouraged) to discuss and/or get help from classmates at this point, whether in person or virtually. Any help provided should be via discussion only (including sharing screenshots to aid the discussion if needed), but should *not* include sending or copying of files or portion of files. Everything in your individual submission should be entered by you, based on your understanding of the material. This individual attempt should be submitted to Canvas. The individual submissions will be reviewed, but only graded for completion and effort with feedback given only if there was a deficiency in completion or effort. Students should then meet in their pre-assigned study teams (virtually as needed) to compare solutions, clarify issues that were encountered, and streamline the various analyses into a single submission from the team. Take this opportunity to make sure everyone on the team understands the material and everything in the team assignment that is being submitted. At this stage (after everyone has submitted their individual submissions), sharing of files is permitted. One member of each team should submit the team submission to Canvas. If possible, include all spreadsheets in a single workbook on separate tabs. The team submissions will be graded for accuracy and correctness, and thorough feedback provided.

STUDY TEAMS

The problem sets and student projects will be done in teams of three to five. The teams will be self-selected on the first day of class. At the end of the quarter, each member of the team will also evaluate each of the other members of the team in terms of their percentage contribution to the team's problem sets and student project and presentation. The individual evaluations will be confidential, made directly to me through Canvas. Your evaluations from others in your team will be combined and evaluated and individuals that did not make a fair contribution (or made extraordinary contributions) to the team will have their overall problem set or project scores adjusted accordingly.

EXAMS

The midterm exam and final exam will both be take-home exams. You will be given nearly one week for each. These exams are open book and open notes with no time limit (other than the due date), but must be completed individually, without assistance from any other person. Use of the internet (beyond the class Canvas site) is not allowed.

CLASS PARTICIPATION

Class participation is important. The class should be a common learning experience. Thus, we want you to take ownership and initiative for the success of the class. It is critical that you arrive for each class fully prepared to lead the discussion if called upon. Share your knowledge and help others understand your point of view.

DISCUSSION BOARDS

There are discussion boards available on Canvas for every class session. These are provided for questions or comments about the videos or class sessions. Also feel free to answer questions -- I encourage you to help your classmates! I will be monitoring this discussion periodically to provide help. Participating in these discussion boards is also an important component of class participation.

STUDENT PROJECTS & PRESENTATIONS

Student projects and presentations will be done in teams of three to five students (the same teams as your problem sets). Presentations will be given at the end of the quarter on two dates during our live class sessions. If you have a preference for presentation day, please let me know ASAP. I will accommodate as best as possible on a first-come-first-served basis.

You may choose either of the following for the topic of your presentation:

1. Develop a spreadsheet model that addresses a decision that needs to be made. Present the decision to be made, the spreadsheet model developed to address it, and the results of the model.
2. Research a model that was developed by a business to address a decision that needed to be made. There are many references to “real-world” applications in the textbook. Most make reference to the journal *Interfaces* (recently renamed *INFORMS Journal on Applied Analytics*), which is a good resource for management science models that have been developed and used in business. (This journal is available in the Foster library, including virtually through links available on Canvas.) Present a “case study” of the model, including discussion of the decision to be made, demonstrating a spreadsheet version of the model that was developed, and discussing the results obtained with the model. The model need not have originally been a spreadsheet model (e.g., it may have been an LP solved using an algebraic solver); if it is not, you will need to create a spreadsheet based upon the ideas of their model to show the class how the model works in spreadsheet form.

In either case, the spreadsheet model should build upon or be related to one of the techniques covered in this class. The presentations should be approximately 10 minutes after which there will be a short question-and-answer period. The presentation (and spreadsheet submission) will be graded for both content (two-thirds weight) and quality of presentation (one-third weight). Qualities I will be looking for include: (1) does the model build effectively on the modeling techniques discussed in class, (2) how well does the model address the decision being made, (3) is the presentation clear and easy to understand, (4) can you convince the audience that the model is effective and the solution a good one. More successful presentations typically discuss the model at a relatively high level, without digging into the model at the formula level.

Deliverables:

- Thursday, February 20 (by the end of the day) have one member of your team submit to Canvas a brief description of your topic, a brief description of the model you intend to build or discuss, and a date preference (if you have one) for the presentation.
- At least one hour before class on your presentation day, please have one member of your team submit to Canvas the spreadsheet model that your team has built and any other electronic items used in your presentation (e.g., Powerpoint slides).

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE ACCOMMODATION

Washington state law requires that UW develop a policy for accommodation of student absences or significant hardship due to reasons of faith or conscience, or for organized religious activities. The UW's policy, including more information about how to request an accommodation, is available at [Religious Accommodations Policy \(<https://registrar.washington.edu/staffandfaculty/religious-accommodations-policy/>\)](https://registrar.washington.edu/staffandfaculty/religious-accommodations-policy/). Accommodations must be requested within the first two weeks of this course using the [Religious Accommodations Request form \(<https://registrar.washington.edu/students/religious-accommodations-request/>\)](https://registrar.washington.edu/students/religious-accommodations-request/).

QMETH 551 SCHEDULE

	Section A&B	Section C&D	
Session #1: Modeling with Spreadsheets Review: Text, Chapter 1	Mon, January 6	Mon, January 6	
Session #2: Applications of Linear Programming Review: Core Sessions #2-4; Text, Chapters 2-4	Wed, January 8		
Due: Problem Set #1 (Linear Programming)	Sun, Jan 12 (individual) / Mon, Jan 13 (team)		
Session #3: Network Models Read: Text, Chapter 6	Mon, January 13	Mon, January 13	
Session #4 Nonlinear & Separable Programming Read: Text, Sections 8.1–8.3	Wed, January 15		
Session #5 Applications of Optimization	asynchronous class (view recordings)		
Due: Problem Set #2 (Network & Nonlinear)	Sun, Jan 26 (individual) / Mon, Jan 27 (team)		
Session #6: Applications of Integer Models Review: Core Session #6; Text, Chapter 7	Mon, January 27	Mon, January 27	
Session #7: Municipal Bond Underwriting Case Study Prepare: Municipal Bond Case Study (back of packet)	Wed, January 29		
Due: Problem Set #3 (Integer)	Sun, Feb 2 (individual) / Mon, Feb 3 (team)		
Session #8: Multiple Objectives and Goal Programming Read: Text, Chapter 17	Mon, February 3 (no class Wed, Feb. 5)	Mon, February 3	
Session #9: Evolutionary Solver Read: Text, Sections 8.4–8.5	Mon, February 10		
Due: Midterm Exam (Available Monday, February 3, 10pm)	Sunday, February 9		
Session #10: Macros, VBA, Analytic Solver, and alldifferent Constraint	Wed, February 12	Mon, February 10	
Session #11: Simulation and Crystal Ball Review: Core Sessions #9-10; Text, Sections 20.1–20.8	Wed, February 19		
Due: Problem Set #4 (Goal, Evolutionary)	Tue, Feb 18 (individual) / Wed, Feb 19 (team)		
Due: Student Project Proposals	Thursday, February 20		
Session #12: Mountain Realty Case Study Prepare: Mountain Realty Case Study (back of packet)	Mon, February 24	Mon, February 24	
Session #13: Optimizing with Simulation Read: Text, Section 20.9	Wed, February 26		
Due: Problem Set #5 (Simulation)	Sun March 2 (ind) / Mon Mar 3 (team) [or Sun Mar 9 (ind) / Mon Mar 10 team]		
Session #14: Models for Analyzing Waiting Lines Read: Text, Sections 11.1–11.7	Mon, March 3	Mon, March 3	
Session #15: Student Project Presentations	Wed, March 5		
Session #16: Analysis of Waiting Lines Read: Text, Sections 11.8–11.9	Mon, March 10	Mon, March 10	
Session #17: Student Project Presentations	Wed, March 12		
Due: Peer Evaluations	Thursday, March 13		
Due: Final Exam Early Option (Available Fri, Mar 7, 10pm)	Thursday, March 13		
Due: Final Exam (Available Mon, March 10, 10pm)	Sunday, March 16		

all deliverables due by the end of the day (11:59pm) on the date indicated

SESSION SUMMARIES

SESSION #1: MODELING WITH SPREADSHEETS

In this session we will discuss the role of models in managerial decision making, including the use of spreadsheets, and provide an overview of the models and techniques to be covered in this quarter. We discuss good and poor spreadsheet modeling, and how proper layout and formatting can produce models that are easier to build, debug, read, and modify.

SESSION #2: APPLICATIONS OF LINEAR PROGRAMMING WITH SPREADSHEETS

We discuss applications of linear programming with spreadsheets to problems in finance, marketing, and operations.

SESSION #3: NETWORK MODELS

Transportation and communication networks pervade our daily lives. In this session, we discuss applications of network optimization. We then discover that most network optimization problems are really linear programming problems. We discuss minimum-cost flow, maximum flow, shortest path, and equipment replacement problems.

SESSION #4: NONLINEAR AND SEPARABLE PROGRAMMING

Here we discuss spreadsheet models with a nonlinear objective function and/or nonlinear constraints. What are the ramifications on solvability? We also will discuss the use of separable programming to approximate a nonlinear model with a linear one.

SESSION #5: APPLICATIONS OF OPTIMIZATION

In this session we combine various optimization techniques to develop advanced optimization models addressing problems in project management and pricing and revenue management.

SESSION #6: APPLICATIONS OF INTEGER MODELS

In this session we address problems where some or all of the decision variables are required to assume integer values and discuss the application of binary variables. We review big-number constraints and also add to the "bag of tricks" that are possible with binary variables.

SESSION #7: MUNICIPAL BOND UNDERWRITING CASE STUDY

In this session we discuss the application of binary integer models to a municipal bond underwriting case. We also discuss other advanced applications of integer programming.

SESSION #8: MULTIPLE OBJECTIVES AND GOAL PROGRAMMING

In this session we look at problems that have more than one objective. Techniques for addressing all of the objectives are discussed.

SESSION #9: EVOLUTIONARY SOLVER

We introduce genetic algorithms and the Evolutionary Solver to address problems that can not be solved using the standard Solver.

SESSION #10: MACROS, VBA, ANALYTIC SOLVER, AND THE ALLDIFFERENT CONSTRAINT

In this session we will discuss the use of macros and VBA, how they can aid in modeling, and how they can be used to create a decision support system. Next, the Analytic Solver Platform will be demonstrated. Finally, we discuss the alldifferent constraint and its applications.

SESSION #11: SIMULATION AND CRYSTAL BALL

In this session we discuss the use of the Crystal Ball Excel add-in for performing Monte-Carlo simulation, and applications in finance, marketing, and operations.

SESSION #12: MOUNTAIN REALTY CASE STUDY

In this session we will use Crystal Ball to explore a business decision faced by Mountain Realty.

SESSION #13: OPTIMIZING WITH SIMULATION

In this session we discuss how optimization can be performed with a simulation spreadsheet model. The OptQuest add-in for Crystal Ball will be demonstrated.

SESSION #14: MODELS FOR ANALYZING WAITING LINES

In this session we introduce analytical models and corresponding spreadsheet templates for predicting the effects of congestion in waiting line systems. Single and multiple-server queues, priority queues, and systems with finite queue capacity will all be discussed.

SESSION #15: STUDENT PRESENTATIONS

Groups of three to five students will give a 10 minute presentation about a model that they have developed or that a business has used to analyze a problem.

SESSION #16: ANALYSIS OF WAITING LINES

In this session, we utilize the queueing templates to make the following kinds of decisions: How many servers should we use? How much space needs to be made available for the waiting line? How many phone lines and representatives should a call center utilize? When should a priority scheme be utilized?

SESSION #17: STUDENT PRESENTATIONS

Groups of three to five students will give a 10 minute presentation about a model that they have developed or that a business has used to analyze a problem.