



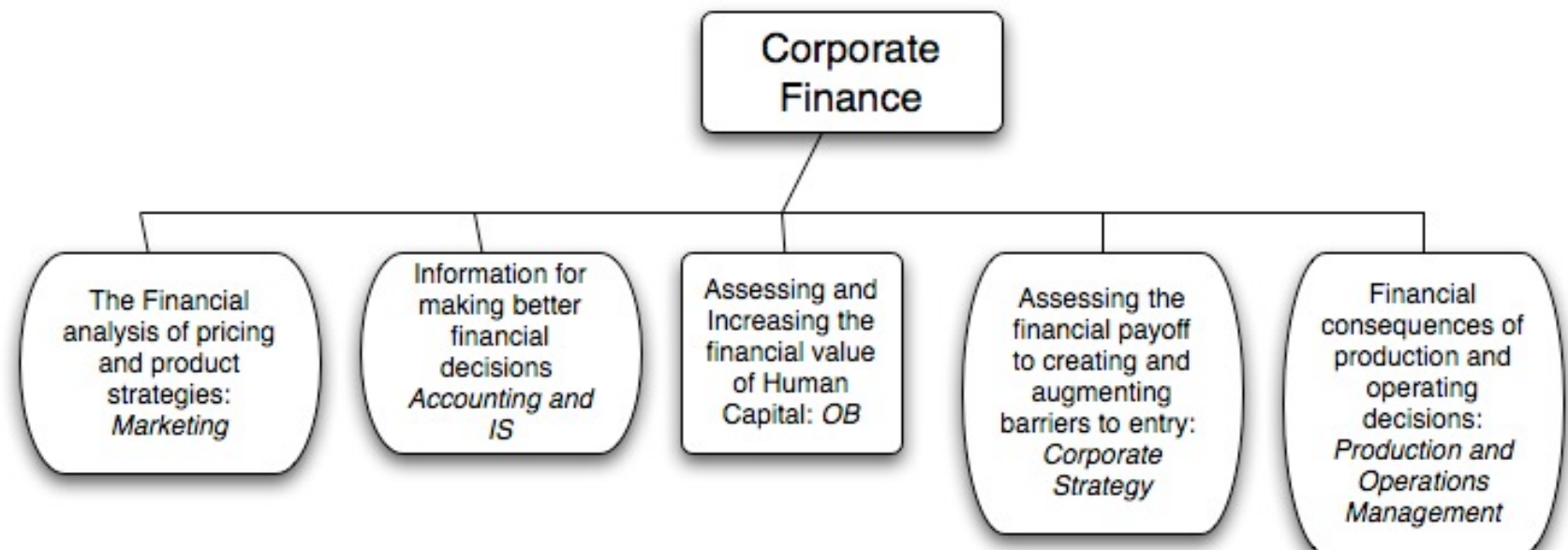
CORPORATE FINANCE: THE WHAT, THE WHY AND FOR WHOM?

Aswath Damodaran

What is corporate finance?

2

- Every decision that a business makes has financial implications, and any decision which affects the finances of a business is a corporate finance decision.
- Defined broadly, everything that a business does fits under the rubric of corporate finance.



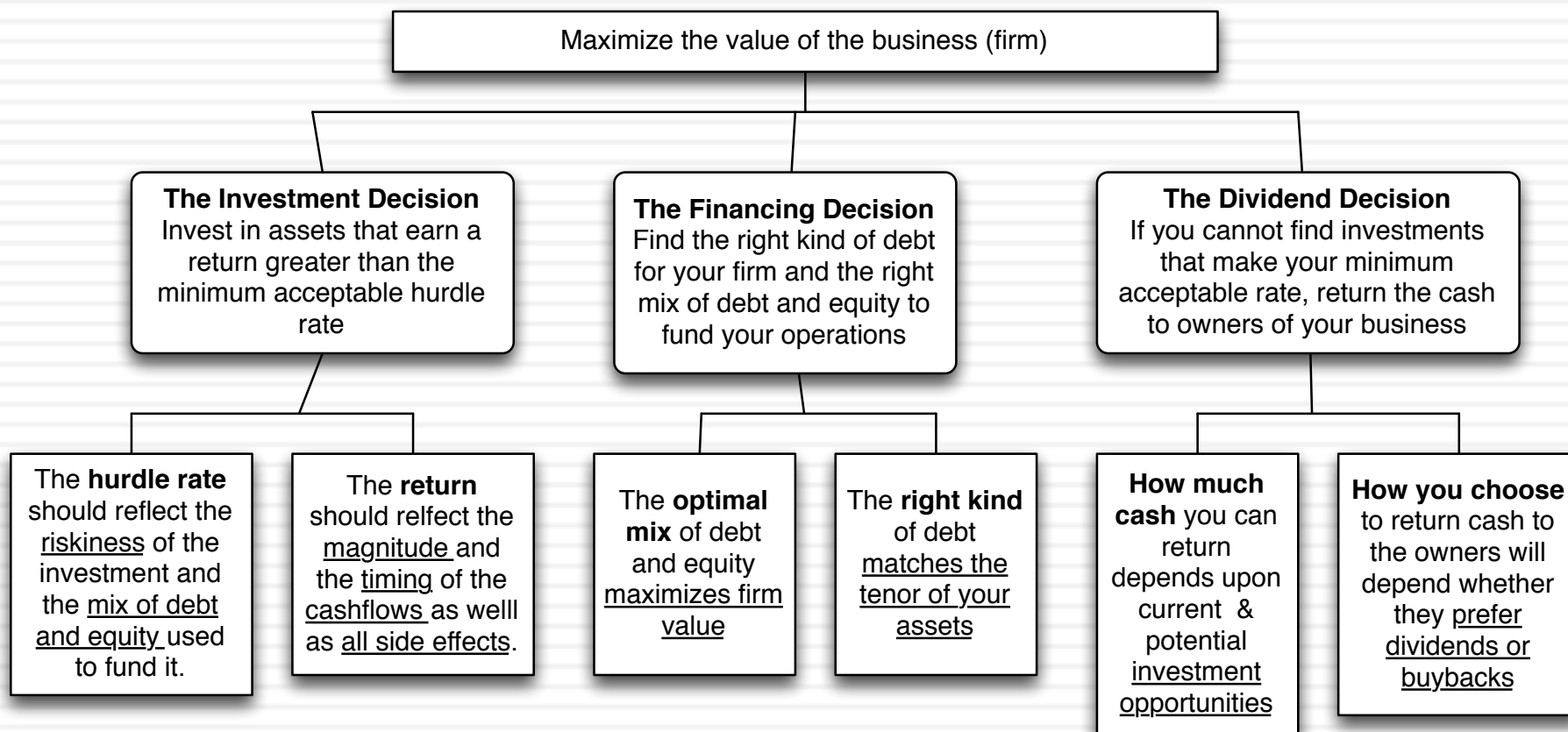
Course Objectives

3

- To give you the capacity to understand the theory and apply, in real world situations, the techniques that have been developed in corporate finance.
 - ▣ Motto for class: If it cannot be applied, who cares?.
- To give you the big picture of corporate finance so that you can understand how things fit together.
 - ▣ Motto for class: You can forget the details, but don't miss the storyline.
- To show you that corporate finance is fun.
 - ▣ Question for class: Are we having fun yet?

First Principles & The Big Picture

4



Theme 1: Corporate finance is “common sense”

5

- There is nothing earth shattering about any of the first principles that govern corporate finance.
 - Arguing that taking investments that make 9% with funds that cost 10% to raise seems to be stating the obvious (the investment decision)
 - So is noting that it is better to find a funding mix which costs 10% instead of 11% (the financing decision)
 - And positing that if most of your investment opportunities generate returns less than your cost of funding, it is best to return the cash to the owners of the business and shrink the business.
- Shrewd business people, notwithstanding their lack of exposure to corporate finance theory, have always recognized these fundamentals and put them into practice.

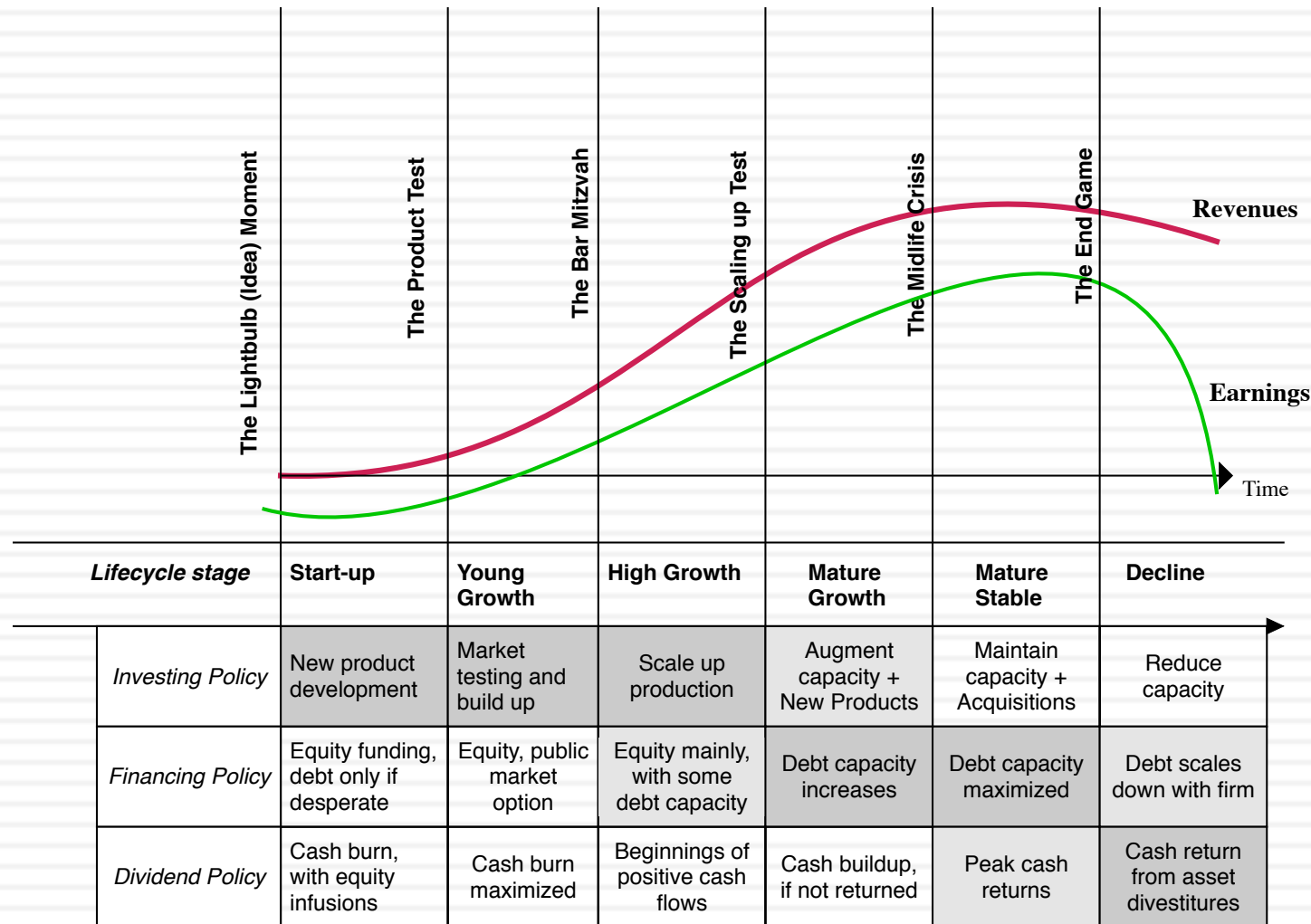
Theme 2: Corporate finance is focused...

6

- It is the focus on maximizing the value of the business that gives corporate finance its focus. As a result of this singular objective, we can
 - ▣ Choose the “right” investment decision rule to use, given a menu of such rules.
 - ▣ Determine the “right” mix of debt and equity for a specific business
 - ▣ Examine the “right” amount of cash that should be returned to the owners of a business and the “right” amount to hold back as a cash balance.
- This certitude does come at a cost. To the extent that you accept the objective of maximizing firm value, everything in corporate finance makes complete sense. If you do not, nothing will.

Theme 3: The focus in corporate finance changes across the life cycle...

7



Theme 4: Corporate finance is universal...

8

- Every business, small or large, public or private, US or emerging market, has to make investment, financing and dividend decisions.
- The objective in corporate finance for all of these businesses remains the same: maximizing value.
- While the constraints and challenges that firms face can vary dramatically across firms, the first principles do not change.
 - A publicly traded firm, with its greater access to capital markets and more diversified investor base, may have much lower costs of debt and equity than a private business, but they both should look for the financing mix that minimizes their costs of capital.
 - A firm in an emerging market may face greater uncertainty, when assessing new investments, than a firm in a developed market, but both firms should invest only if they believe they can generate higher returns on their investments than they face as their respective (and very different) hurdle rates.

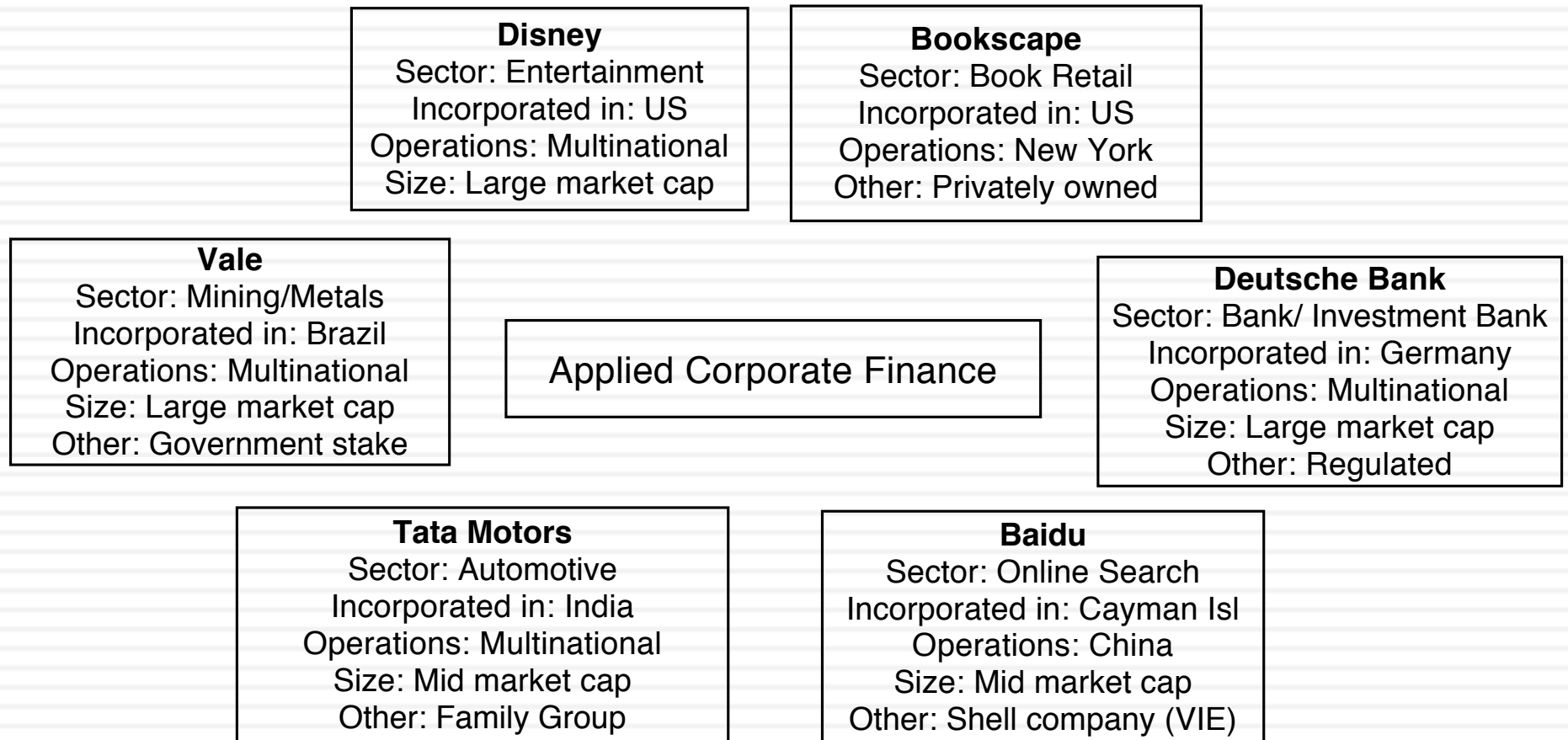
Theme 5: If you violate first principles, you will pay a price, no matter who you are..

9

- There are some investors/analysts/managers who convince themselves that the first principles don't apply to them because of their superior education, standing or past successes, and then proceed to put into place strategies or schemes that violate first principles.
 - Sooner or later, these strategies will blow up and create huge costs.
 - Almost every corporate disaster or bubble has its origins in a violation of first principles.

And it will be applied...

10



Grading Basis

11

- An Applied Project: Each of you will work on a company (that you pick), and apply everything we do in class on this company. In effect, you will be constructing a full corporate financial analysis of your company and presenting it in narrative form. It will be due two weeks after classes end and will be worth 40% of your grade.
- Individual Work:
 - Quizzes: There will be three open-book and open-notes quizzes worth 10% each.
 - Quiz 1: Session 10 - Covers sessions 1-9
 - Quiz 2: Session 16 - Covers sessions 10-15
 - Quiz 3: Session 23- Covers session 16-22
 - Final Exam: This will also be an open-book and open-notes cumulative exam, worth 30%.