COMM 486I
Applications of AI in Finance

Info Session

Jan Bena, Jose Pizarro and James Shou

May 7, 2026

UBC SAUDER
SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

Applications of AI In Finance

*This course explores the **application** of artificial intelligence and machine learning in modern finance, with an emphasis on investment strategies, market analysis, and financial decision-making.*

Jan Bena

Associate Professor, Bank of Montreal Chair in International Finance, Finance Division

Jose Pizarro

Lecturer, Finance Division

James Shou

Adjunct Professor, Finance Division

Today’s Info Session

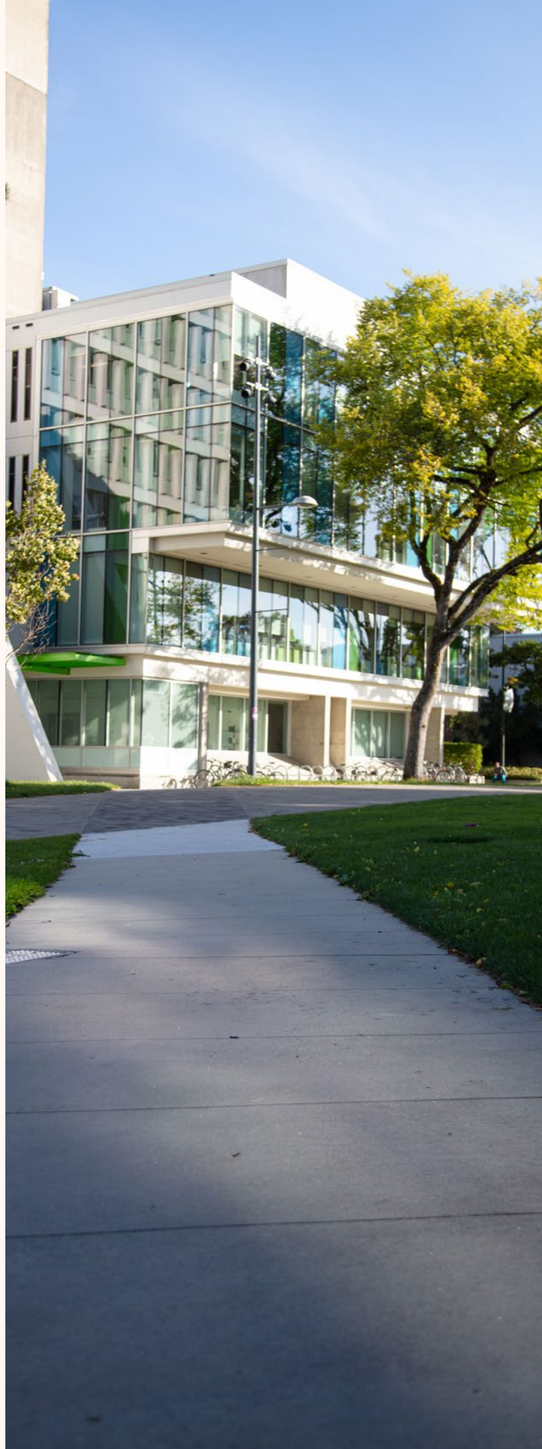
- **Hands-on coursework**
  - Develop **AI-driven finance project** using live market data.
- **Bring your background**
  - Commerce, CS, Engineering, Math, Economics, Stats… collaborate across disciplines to do work that **matters to industry**.

Agenda

1. Course Overview
2. Learning Objectives
3. Course Outline
4. Admission Process
5. COMM 486I – Summer Camp

Course Overview

- **Apply AI & ML to Real Financial Problems**
  - Investment strategies, market analysis, economic forecasting, etc.
- **Project-Based Approach**
  - Define a topic of your interest.
  - Review finance & economics literature to identify open research questions and build your conceptual framework.
  - Source relevant data and select appropriate AI models.
  - Generate, interpret, critique, and validate results through both a theoretical and practical lens.
- **Learn About a Wide Range of AI Models**
  - Teams present periodically their progress and discuss their AI framework.
  - Decision trees, CNNs, Vision Transformers, Natural Language Processing (NLP), etc.
- **Grounded in decision-making contexts from leading financial institutions**
  - Capstone Presentations with Connor, Clark & Lunn (CCL).
- **Collaborative & Cross-Disciplinary by Design**
  - Projects co-designed with faculty, tailored to your team's interests.
  - Commerce, CS, Engineering, and beyond…



Learning Objectives

- Rather than simply learning tools and techniques, you'll be expected to **think like a researcher and a practitioner**.

- ***AI and Machine Learning in Finance: Applied Research and Industry Relevance***
  - Cross-disciplinary teams explore the potential of AI/ML to transform financial markets through **original, industry-relevant research,** spanning portfolio management, investment analysis, trading strategies, sentiment analysis, and financial forecasting.
  - Grounded in academic rigor, projects identify methodological strengths, limitations, and opportunities for practical application across the financial landscape.
  - *LOs: Critical thinking, apply, design, develop, implement.*

- **Research Validation**
  - Industry relevance confirmed through Capstone Presentations delivered in front of industry professionals.
  - *LOs: assess, validate, communicate.*

Preliminary Course Outline

Lecture Sessions
- Lectures introduce the financial theory and economic intuition underlying the course.
- Discuss how modern ML and AI methods can be used to operationalize these theoretical frameworks.

Student-Faculty Meetings
- Discuss potential topics you would like to explore and skills you would like to develop in this course.

.

Research-Informed Workshops
- Each student group will deliver one research-informed workshop on academic papers of their choosing, selected for their relevance to the group's project area.

Term Project Interim Presentation
- Each student group will deliver a presentation on their ongoing term project, focused on problem formulation and project design rather than final results.

Final Project Presentation and Report
- The final project presentation (Capstone Day with CCL) and deliverables (Report + Slides + Code) represent the culmination of the course and emphasize implementation, evaluation, and decision-making.

Admission Process

Admission to COMM 486I is by application only and is restricted to students entering Year 4 in any undergraduate program at UBC.

To apply…

Self-enroll in the application site using **Canvas** and complete all sections of the application forms.

Application Timeline

- We'll be accepting and evaluating applications on a **rolling basis** until **December 11, 2026.**
- First deadline: **Friday, May 15, 2026 at 4:00 PM**.
  - Successful applicants will be notified of acceptance by end-of-May
  - Eligible to participate in the **Applications of AI in Finance - Summer Camp**

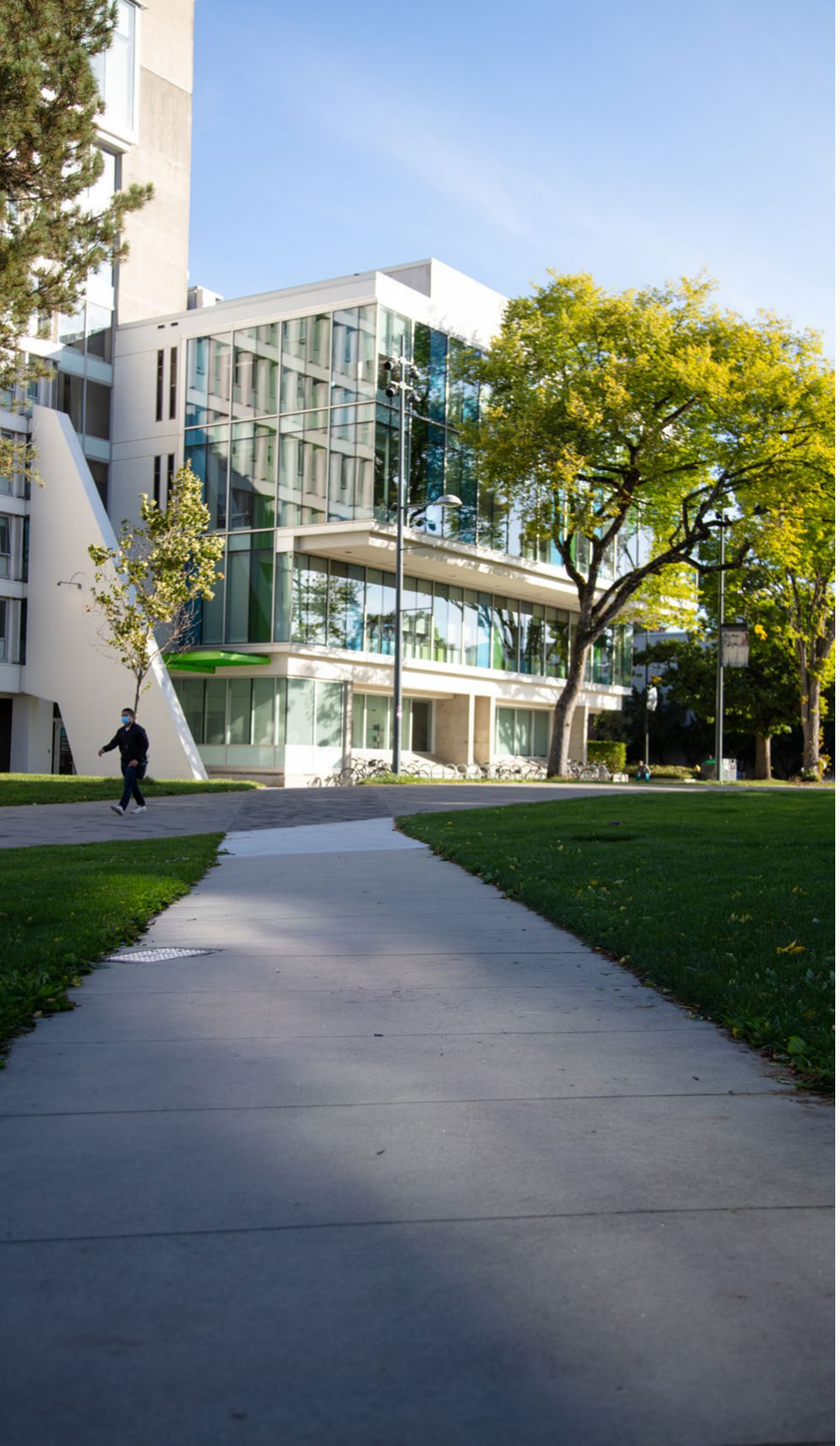
Application Components

- The course requires a combination of knowledge in three key areas: finance, computer programming, and quantitative skills in statistics or econometrics
- This knowledge can be acquired through relevant coursework
  - **Finance**: COMM 298, COMR 473, COMM/COEC 370, COMM/COEC 371, or equivalent
  - **Computer Programming:** CPSC 103, CPSC 110 or equivalent.
  - **Quantitative Skills:** COMM 414, COMM 415, ECON 328, or equivalent.

As part of the admission process, applicants will be asked to share information about their background in the following three areas, organized into the following modules:

1. CV and Unofficial Transcript Upload
2. Relevant Coursework
3. Personal Experience in Finance/Coding

To complete your application, please make sure **to submit all required surveys**, in each module.



Summer Camp 2026

- Extracurricular, experiential learning opportunity is open **exclusively and voluntarily** to students admitted to COMM 486I during the first student intake (first deadline to apply is **Friday, May 15, 2026 at 4:00 PM**).

- The Summer Camp will be led by the Sauder's Finance faculty with active participation from Connor, Clark & Lunn Investment Management (CCL), a leading Canadian investment firm whose quant team is based in Vancouver. CCL is generously supporting this initiative.

- The Summer Camp runs from **June to September 2026.**
  - Structured lectures will be delivered online in early June.
  - Students will then work asynchronously throughout the remainder of the summer in teams, with a Mid-Summer Progress Workshop in July to assess and provide feedback.
  - Capstone Presentation Day in early September with CCL.

UBC SAUDER
SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

Thank you

Questions?