RUTGERS–NEW BRUNSWICK
School of Environmental and Biological Sciences

Food, Agricultural, and Resource Economics (FARE)

Course Name: Personal Finance
Financial Literacy and Wellness (FINWELL) (Name to be changed)
Course Number: 11:373:353: Section 90
Semester: Spring 2027
Prerequisites: Introduction to Microeconomics
Meeting days, place, time, and Location: Asynchronous online

Contact Information

Instructor(s): Dr. Isaac Vellangany
Office Location: Cook Office Building, Room No.112
Phone: 848 932 9132
Email: isaacv@rutgers.edu (best way to communicate)
Office Hours: Every Tuesday 9.00 AM -10,00 AM (voluntary) via Canvas Zoom and by appointment.

Course, Website Resources and Materials

- Course Website: Canvas (LMS). Log on to Canvas with your netid and password to access the course resources.
- Textbook: Personal Finance, 8th edition, by Jeff Madura Published by Pearson (2024) © 2025
  Textbook Link:
  Recommendation: The Psychology of Money (free download)

Course Description

This course introduces the principles and practices of personal finance with an emphasis on financial literacy, student wellness, and informed decision-making. Students will explore topics including budgeting, financial planning, saving strategies, credit management, debt reduction, insurance, investing, retirement planning, taxes, and consumer decision-making. The course also examines the relationship between financial well-being and overall student wellness, including the impact of financial stress on academic success, mental health, and quality of life.

Emphasis is placed on applying financial concepts to real-life situations to promote long-term financial stability, personal well-being, and responsible money management. Through discussions, activities, and practical exercises, students will develop the knowledge and skills needed to make sound financial decisions that support both financial security and overall wellness throughout their lives.

Learning Goals

By the conclusion of this course, student-learners will:

1. Understand and apply key principles of personal finance, including budgeting, saving, and investing.
2. Develop strategies for managing income, reducing debt, and making informed financial decisions.
3. Gain proficiency in evaluating financial products such as insurance, investments, and retirement plans.
4. Assess the importance of estate planning and real estate investments in wealth accumulation and credit management in personal financial planning
5. Create a personal financial plan for short term, medium term and long term as a guide to your financial and personal wellbeing.

Assignments/Responsibilities, Grading & Assessment

Assignments (via Canvas)	Percent Value
Threaded Discussions	10%
Written Assignments	15%
Weekly Quizzes	20%
Final Project	15%
Tests: Midterm and final	40%
Total	100%

Grading Policy

- This course uses a point-based grading system. Students earn points by successfully completing course assignments and assessments. Assignment point values are based on the complexity, scope, and level of effort required.
- Unless otherwise specified, all assignments are due by 11:59 p.m. on the due dates listed in the course modules.
- Late assignments will receive a score of zero (0) points unless the student contacts the instructor before the assignment due date and receives written approval for an extension. Requests submitted after the due date will not be considered except in documented extenuating circumstances and at the instructor's discretion.

- Students who have questions or concerns regarding a graded assignment must contact the instructor within seven (7) calendar days of the grade being posted. After this review period has expired, assignment grades will be considered final.
- Please note that the Canvas Total Grade may not accurately reflect the final course grade because it may not account for the course's grading structure or weighted calculations. Students are encouraged to monitor their earned points throughout the semester and contact the instructor with any questions regarding their course standing.

Online Threaded Discussions

Online threaded discussions are an essential component of this course and are designed to promote critical thinking, collaborative learning, and the application of course concepts. After completing the assigned weekly readings and learning activities, students are expected to participate in the discussion activities for that week.

Discussion prompts are located under the Threaded Discussion tab within each week's course content. Successful participation requires students to:

- Submit substantive, well-developed initial responses that demonstrate thoughtful engagement with the assigned readings, course materials, and discussion prompts.
- Support responses with appropriate evidence, examples, or references when applicable.
- Engage respectfully and constructively with classmates by responding to their posts in ways that advance discussion, encourage critical thinking, and contribute to a collaborative learning environment.
- Complete all discussion activities by the published deadlines.

Accommodation for Students with disabilities

Please follow the procedures outlined at https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/getting-registered.

Full policies and procedures are at https://ods.rutgers.edu/

Course Schedule: (I reserve the right to alter the schedule as and when needed. Canvas announcement will alter you about the changes)

Week/Chapter/Topic	Learning Objectives	Activities & Assignments
Week 1. Course Introduction & Chapter 1: Personal Financial Planning. Link between financial literacy and student wellness	Understand financial planning process and goal setting	Icebreaker, financial goals worksheet, pre-course financial literacy quiz
Week 2. Chapter 2: Career Planning & Budgeting	Develop spending plans and career goals	Create a monthly budget using Excel or Google Sheets; career salary research

Week 3. Chapter 3: Banking Services	Compare financial institutions and banking products	Compare checking accounts from three banks; reconcile a bank statement
Week 4. Chapter 4: Consumer Credit	Explain credit scores, loans, and responsible borrowing	Calculate loan payments; review a sample credit report. Get your credit report form the three reporting Agencies.
Week 5. Chapter 5: Consumer Loans	Evaluate financing options for major purchases	Auto loan comparison activity; debt management case study
Week 6. Chapter 6: Credit Cards	Analyze credit card costs and benefits	Credit card comparison project; calculating interest charges
Week 7. Chapter 7: Housing Decision	Compare renting versus buying	Rent vs. buy analysis; apartment search assignment
Week 8. Midterm Review & Exam **Final Financial Planning Project milestone review.**	Demonstrate understanding of Weeks 1–7	Midterm Exam – 50 questions: multiple choice/problem set/short essay questions.
Week 9. Chapter 8: Investing Fundamentals.	Understand risk, return, diversification, and investment planning	Investment risk tolerance survey; stock market simulation begins
Week. 10. Chapter 9: Investing in Stocks & Bonds	Evaluate common investment options	Analyze two publicly traded companies; bond yield calculations
Week 11. Chapter 10: Mutual Funds & Retirement Planning	Explain retirement accounts and investment funds	Retirement savings calculator; mutual fund comparison
Week 12. Chapter 11: Insurance	Understand risk management and insurance products	Insurance policy comparison; case study on insurance claims
Week 13. Chapter 12: Tax Planning	Identify major taxes and tax-saving strategies	Complete a basic Form 1040 simulation; tax bracket exercise
Week 14. Chapter 13: Estate Planning & Financial Planning Review	Understand wills, trusts, and estate planning basics	Create a personal financial plan; peer review activity

Week 15. Final Presentations & Comprehensive Final Exam	Demonstrate mastery of personal finance concepts	Student financial plan presentations; Final Exam

Written Assignments

Topics	Assignment
Financial Planning & Goal Setting	Personal Financial Goals Assignment: Write one short-term, one intermediate, and one long-term financial goal. Develop a SMART plan explaining how each goal will be achieved. (2–3 pages)
Budgeting & Cash Flow	Monthly Budget Project: Create a monthly budget using Excel or Google Sheets. Include estimated income, fixed expenses, variable expenses, savings, and emergency funds. Write a one-page reflection on spending habits (1-2 pages with table)
Banking & Financial Services	Bank Comparison Report: Compare three financial institutions by examining checking accounts, savings accounts, interest rates, mobile banking services, and customer benefits. Recommend the best option for a college student. (2 pages)
Credit & Debt Management	Credit Card Analysis: Research three credit cards designed for students. Compare APR, annual fees, rewards, grace periods, and penalties. Determine which card offers the greatest value and explain why.
Housing & Consumer Loans	Rent vs. Buy Case Study: Compare renting and buying a home using a provided scenario. Discuss financial advantages, disadvantages, and the factors influencing each decision. (2–3 pages)
Investing & Retirement Planning	Investment Portfolio Assignment: Build a hypothetical $10,000 investment portfolio consisting of stocks, bonds, mutual funds, ETFs, or CDs. Explain why each investment was selected and discuss the expected level of risk and return.

Discussion Assignments (See Rubrics Under Module in Canvas)

General Expectations (Discussion topic opens on Sunday Discussion

- Post your **initial response (100 -150 words) by Wednesday at 11:59 p.m.**
- Respond to at least **two classmates by Saturday at 11:59 p.m.**
- Demonstrate critical thinking by connecting course concepts to real-life situations.

- . Support your ideas with examples from the textbook, credible sources, current events, or personal experiences.
- Maintain respectful and professional communication
- Use proper grammar, spelling, and APA citations (if outside sources are used).

Discussion 1: Financial Stress and Student Wellness
Financial stress is one of the most common challenges faced by college students. How can concerns about tuition, housing, food, transportation, or debt affect a student's mental health, academic performance, and overall well-being? Share one strategy that students can use to reduce financial stress while maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

Discussion 2: Budgeting for a Healthy Lifestyle
Many students believe that eating healthy, exercising, and practicing self-care are too expensive. Do you agree? Develop a weekly wellness budget that includes healthy food, physical activity, transportation, and leisure activities. Discuss how careful budgeting can improve both financial stability and personal wellness.

Discussion 3: Investing in Yourself
Personal finance is about more than managing money, it also involves investing in yourself. Which investments do you believe provide the greatest long-term return for a college student (e.g., education, certifications, physical health, mental health, networking, or professional development)? Explain how these investments can improve both financial success and overall wellness after graduation.

Discussion 4: Work-Life Balance and Financial Success
Many college students work part-time or full-time while attending school. How can balancing employment, academics, and personal wellness affect financial success and academic achievement? In your opinion, how many hours per week should a student work full-time enrolled? Explain your reasoning and suggest strategies for maintaining a healthy work-life-school balance.

Discussion 5: Emergency Funds and Financial Resilience
Unexpected expenses, such as car repair, medical bill, or loss of income, can create significant stress for college students. Why is an emergency fund important for both financial security and personal wellness? If you were advising a first-year college student, how would you recommend building an emergency fund while managing everyday expenses?

Academic Integrity
The university's policy on Academic Integrity is available at https://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/sites/default/files/pdfs/current.pdf.
The principles of academic integrity require that a student:

- properly acknowledge and cite all use of the ideas, results, or words of others.
- properly acknowledge all contributors to a given piece of work.
- make sure that all work submitted as his or her own in a course or other academic activity is produced without the aid of impermissible materials or impermissible collaboration.
- obtain all data or results by ethical means and report them accurately without suppressing any results inconsistent with his or her interpretation or conclusions.
- treat all other students in an ethical manner, respecting their integrity and right to pursue their educational goals without interference. This requires that a student neither facilitate academic dishonesty by others nor obstruct their academic progress.
- uphold the canons of the ethical or professional code of the profession for which he or she is preparing.

Adherence to these principles is necessary in order to ensure that
- everyone is given proper credit for his or her ideas, words, results, and other scholarly accomplishments.
- all student work is fairly evaluated, and no student has an inappropriate advantage over others.
- the academic and ethical development of all students is fostered.
- the reputation of the University for integrity in its teaching, research, and scholarship is maintained and enhanced.

Student Wellness Services

Service	Description	Contact Information
Student Accommodation	If you are a student in need of accommodation, please register with the **Office of Disability Services** in order to initiate the accommodations process. Please present your letter of accommodation to your instructor during the first week of the semester. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive.	(848) 445-6800 Lucy Stone Hall, Suite A 145, Livingston Campus, 54 Joyce Kilmer Avenue, Piscataway, NJ 08854 https://ods.rutgers.edu/
Just In Case Web App	Access helpful mental health information and resources for yourself or a friend in a mental health crisis on your smartphone or tablet and easily contact CAPS or RUPD.	http://health.rutgers.edu/medical-counseling-services/counseling/caps-next step/

Counseling, ADAP & Psychiatric Services (CAPS)	CAPS is a university mental health support service that includes counseling, alcohol and other drug assistance, and psychiatric services staffed by a team of professional within Rutgers Health services to support students' efforts to succeed at Rutgers University. CAPS offers a variety of services that include individual therapy, group therapy and workshops, crisis intervention, referral to specialists in the community and consultation and collaboration with campus partners.	(848) 932-7884 17 Senior Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901 **Medical Services:** www.rhscaps.rutgers.edu/ http://health.rutgers.edu/medical-counseling-services/medical/ **Counseling Services:** http://health.rutgers.edu/medical-counseling- services/counseling/
Violence Prevention & Victim Assistance (VPVA)	The Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance provides confidential crisis intervention, counseling and advocacy for victims of sexual and relationship violence and stalking students, staff and faculty. To reach staff during office hours when the university is open or to reach an advocate after hours, **call 848-932-1181.**	(848) 932-1181 3 Bartlett Street New Brunswick, NJ 08901 www.vpva.rutgers.edu/
Scarlet Listeners	Free and confidential peer counseling and referral hotline, providing a comforting and supportive safe space.	(732) 247-5555 scarlet.listeners@gmail.com https://scarletlisteners.wixsite.com/scarletlisteners
Academic Support	School of Arts and Sciences Academic Advising for personal, career, and educational goals. Department of Kinesiology & Health Academic Advising for questions about Exercise Science or Sport Management major/minor requirements.	SAS: https://sasundergrad.rutgers.edu/ Dept. of Kinesiology & Health: Lin Williams | lin.williams@rutgers.edu Loree Gym, Room 148 Becky DeMarco | becky.demarco@rutgers.edu https://kines.rutgers.edu/academics/academic-advising