

Finance for Personal and Professional Success
Course: 37:575:250, Section 2 and 3
FALL 2026

Professor Winnie Westcott
Email wwestcot@rutgers.edu
Class Location/Hours **Section 2:** Monday/Thursday 10:20 – 11:40 A.M. Lucy Stone Hall B115
Section 3: Monday/Thursday 12:10 – 1:30 P.M. Lucy Stone Hall B115
Office Hours Before or After Class or Via Webex by appointment
Course Website: <https://canvas.rutgers.edu/>; log in with your RU ID

Course Description:

This course is an overview of core financial concepts and techniques useful both at work and in personal life. Topics include budgets, net worth, taxes, time value of money, banking, interest, credit, personal loans, student loans, buying a home, children and family finance, insurance, investments, retirement, and estate planning.

This course contributes to the Rutgers Core:

QQ. Formulate, evaluate, and communicate conclusions and inferences from quantitative information.

QR. Apply effective and efficient mathematical or other formal processes to reason and to solve problems.

Course Objectives:

- Students will learn effective and efficient mathematical or other formal processes to reason and to solve problems. Specifically, the focus is on the mathematics underlying the process of investment and borrowing/saving money.
- Students will learn to apply concepts from algebra necessary to specify and solve equations related to loans, savings, mortgage, credit and insurance using compound interest.
- Students will become more familiar with core concepts of interest, present value, risk, diversification, and insurance.
- Students will gain exposure and experience in using spreadsheets and other tools in common use for analyzing financial information.
- Students will be introduced to major types of financial instruments including stocks, bonds, mutual funds, and to investments in real estate.
- SMLR Learning Objective: Apply appropriate quantitative and qualitative methods for research workplace issues.
- Labor Studies Department Learning Objective: Formulate, evaluate and communicate conclusions and inferences from quantitative information.

Course Textbook:

Free Online Textbook:

Personal Finance, by Rachel Siegel and Carol Yacht, published by Saylor Publishing.

The textbook is available at the following link: <https://open.umn.edu/opentextbooks/textbooks/31>

Required Software:

Microsoft Excel is required for weekly homework assignments and the in-class team project. You can download the entire Microsoft Office Suite from the Rutgers Software Portal for FREE if you are a student. Mac or Apple users can use the Numbers program if they don't have Microsoft Excel, BUT must convert documents to PDF format BEFORE submitting on Canvas.

Homework

Ten weekly assignments will be assigned throughout the semester. **Students are responsible for checking due dates each week in Canvas.** Instructions must be followed for each assignment. Full credit is earned if all instructions are followed, and the assignment is submitted by the due date. Late complete assignments will receive a 10%-point deduction for each week past the due date, with the minimum grade for completion earning an 80%. Incomplete assignments will receive anywhere between 0-75% depending on the quality of submission. Students will be given one chance to complete the submission and earn full points. Students must check and address all assignment comments posted by me or my teaching assistant in Canvas.

Acceptable formats for submission are Microsoft Word, Excel or PDF only. Assignments submitted in the incorrect format (is. Numbers, pages etc.) will receive a 0 grade.

Team Project:

There will be one team project assigned during the semester. The project will be introduced at the beginning of the semester. While some individual preparation is required, a majority of the work for this project will take place DURING class time based on dates listed on the class schedule below. Please make sure to be present for these classes to earn full credit for the project. Notify me early of any conflicts.

Exams

Three "take-home" or "at-home" exams will be assigned throughout the semester. These exams will be available on Canvas once we have covered the related topics. Once assigned, students will have at least one week to complete the exams. Late submissions will receive a 10%-point deduction. Notify me early of any conflicts with due dates.

Course Web Site - Canvas:

Course announcements, the syllabus, and all chapter power-point presentations will be posted on the course's Canvas web site. This site can be accessed at: www.canvas.rutgers.edu. Please read all Canvas announcements in entirety. **Students should check the email account associated with their official student record.**

Students will find all assignments, projects, take-home exams in the ASSIGNMENTS tab. All power-point presentations and other course material can be found in the MODULES tab under the appropriate topic.

Grading Policy:

Course grades will be determined based on the formula below. The general guidelines for grading distribution is also found below.

Weekly Assignments	20%
Take Home Exams	50%
Team Project - Investing	10%
Personal Financial Plan	20%
Total	100%

A	90 & above
B+	85 - 89
B	80 - 84
C+	75 - 79
C	70 - 74
D	60 - 69
F	59 & below

Code of Conduct and Academic Integrity Policy:

All students are required to adhere to the University's Academic Integrity Policy found at <https://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/sites/default/files/pdfs/current.pdf>. Using unauthorized materials on assignments and tests, submitting another person's work as one's own, using another person's words or ideas without proper citation, unauthorized collaboration, are some examples of violations of the University's Academic Integrity Policy. Violations will not be tolerated and all infractions will be pursued under the University's Academic Integrity Policy. Violations can result in suspension from the University, as well as course failure.

AI Policy

AI tools have legitimate uses, but they are not a substitute for the analytical and communicative skills this course is designed to develop. I will allow the use of AI where it can support the learning process: brainstorming ideas, editing for grammar, etc. I am opposed to using it in ways that prevent students from doing the intellectual work that produces genuine learning, particularly when it comes to mathematical calculations in our class. The use of AI is prohibited for developing your Personal Financial Plan – this plan should be your words based on the financial decisions you intend to make.

Attendance Policy:

Attendance is not mandatory. However, students are expected to attend all sessions. Being a student is your job. I expect you to take it seriously and show up every day on time. I will do my part to ensure that class time is a valuable use of all of our time. I do recognize there will always be some class conflicts – illness, career fairs, games, job interviews etc. However, failure to attend our class sessions on a regular basis could adversely affect your understanding of the material.

Classroom Conduct:

Students should come to class ready and willing to learn. Students should feel that I am accessible and approachable – all questions are welcome! Students should remain attentive and should refrain from talking to each other during the lectures. Cell phones should be silenced and away. Laptop usage is permitted, but is limited to taking notes on the power-point presentations. I will respect you if you respect me. Inappropriate or disrespectful conduct will adversely affect your participation grade.

Correspondence:

I will communicate all the important announcements for our course through Canvas. Students should check their Rutgers email regularly to ensure they don't miss anything. Office hours are available before or after class since I do not have an office on campus. Otherwise, please contact me to schedule a Webex appointment. Students are welcome to email my Rutgers account, but should expect to receive a response in no less than 24-48 hours. Please include your section number in the subject of your email.

Students with Special Needs

If you need accommodation for a disability, please contact (848)445-6800 or email dsoffice@echo.rutgers.edu
The Office of Disability Services is located in the Lucy Stone Hall, Suite A145

Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey abides by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments (ADAA) of 2008, and Sections 504 and 508 which mandate reasonable accommodations be provided for qualified students with disabilities and accessibility of online information. If you have a disability and may require some type of instructional accommodation, please come see me early in the semester and we will work together to ensure your success in the course.

Other Student Resources:

<https://smlr.rutgers.edu/academic-programs/current-students> - Please visit this link to find a list of resources including Victim and Mental Health Support, and Academic Support

<https://smlr.rutgers.edu/academic-programs/scholarships> - Please visit this link to find a number of scholarships and fellowships offered by the School of Management and Labor Relations to support its students.

<http://campusstatus.rutgers.edu> – Please visit this link for updates on University/Campus Closings: 732-932-INFO (New Brunswick);

Tentative Class Schedule

Day of the Week	Date	Class #	Topic
Thursday	9/3/26	1	Syllabus & Class Introduction
Tuesday (Monday Classes)	9/8/26	2	Foundations of Personal Finance - Goals, Budgets, Cash Flow
Thursday	9/10/26	3	Foundations of Personal Finance - Goals, Budgets, Cash Flow
Monday	9/14/26	4	Team Project Intro/ Vision Board Presentations
Thursday	9/17/26	5	Vision Board Presentations
Monday	9/21/26	6	Time Value
Thursday	9/24/26	7	Time Value
Monday	9/28/26	8	Income Taxes
Thursday	10/1/26	9	Income Taxes
Monday	10/5/26	10	Income Taxes
Thursday	10/8/26	11	Banking, Managing Your Money, Savings
Monday	10/12/26	12	Banking, Managing Your Money, Savings
Thursday	10/15/26	13	Credit Cards, Identity Theft
Monday	10/19/26	14	Credit Cards, Identity Theft
Thursday	10/22/26	15	Personal, Auto, Student, Home Loans
Monday	10/26/26	16	Personal, Auto, Student, Home Loans
Thursday	10/29/26	17	Auto Insurance
Monday	11/2/26	18	Home Insurance
Thursday	11/5/26	19	Health & Disability Insurance
Monday	11/9/26	20	Life Insurance
Thursday	11/12/26	21	Investing
Monday	11/16/26	22	Investing / In Class Team Project
Thursday	11/19/26	23	Investing / In Class Team Project
Monday	11/23/26	24	Investing / In Class Team Project
Monday	11/30/26	25	Retirement Planning
Thursday	12/3/26	26	Estate Planning / General Career Class
Monday	12/7/26	27	Work on Take Home/Financial Plans
Thursday	12/10/26	28	Work on Take Home/Financial Plans