**Course Syllabus**

**Finance 3000**

**Personal Finance**

**Summer 2024**

# **Professor** Bill Reese

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Office Hours: by appointment

**Course Material** No Textbook – all materials are available on class website:

**Prerequisites** None

**Description** This course is for students who want to increase their understanding of personal finance concepts. We will focus on the important financial issues that affect each of us such as investments, taxes, insurance, inflation, mortgages, and credit. Additionally, this course will help students to understand basic financial and economic concepts that will likely be discussed at work and in the media. By the end of the semester, students will be financially literate, with the knowledge, skills and confidence to take charge of their financial futures. They will be able to save and invest intelligently, use credit wisely, and understand how our financial system operates.

**Grading** Final Exam (in-person) 30%

Midterm Exam (online) 20%

WSJ Assignments (4) 10%

Stock-Trak Report 10%

Budget Assignment 5%

Credit/Debit Assignment 5%

Am I Diversified? Assignment 5%

Insurance Assignment 5%

Savings Plan Assignment 5%

Attendance and Attentiveness 5%

I plan to adhere to the Freeman School grading guidelines which recommend a class-GPA in the range of 3.00 – 3.33 for elective undergraduate courses.

**Objectives** By the end of this course, students will be able to do the following:

1. Set up a personal budget
2. File a basic tax return
3. Understand the importance of saving and investing with the ability to intelligently evaluate various investment instruments
4. Understand the basic principles of the time value of money and diversification
5. Read financially-oriented news articles and listen to financial discussions with an understanding of the concepts and terms being used and how the issues apply to them
6. Make intelligent financial decisions regarding the purchase or use of insurance products, mortgages, credit and/or debit cards, car loans and savings plans
7. Understand the fundamental tradeoff between risk and (expected) return in investments

**Experiential**

**Learning** Each student will join an investment team (minimum 3 and maximum 5 students per team) and will participate in a portfolio simulation exercise managing $1,000,000 over the semester. The simulation is professionally-managed by Stock-Trak Global Portfolio Simulations. Through this exercise, students will gain a better understanding of how stocks and bonds are traded, how portfolios are formed, how investment decisions can either work out well or go badly, and what factors influence investment returns.

Students will work through several instructor-designed Excel spreadsheets which allow them to discover the principles of diversification, how much to save for retirement, and how a loan is amortized.

**Assignments** Several assignments will be given where students will be asked to apply the concepts learned in class to their personal financial decisions. For example, they will be asked to:

1. Prepare a personal budget
2. Prepare a personal balance sheet
3. Evaluate their choice of credit and/or debit cards and research their credit reports
4. Evaluate their auto, renter’s, health, and life insurance plans
5. Set up (on paper) a long-term savings plan

Additionally, students will be required to read one business article each week in the Wall Street Journal and to turn in a short summary of the article and how it might affect them personally. The Freeman School maintains an online subscription that you can access for free.

**Readings** Our Course Schedule – on the last page of this syllabus – has a column for required readings. Each reading should be completed prior to the start of class on the day it is listed. These readings can be found on the class website.

**Participation** I think that it is important for you to attend class and participate in class discussions. You will be responsible for anything covered in class, even if you are not in attendance that day. In addition to the 5% of your grade that is based on attendance and participation, I reserve the right to reduce a student’s grade due to excessive absences from class or a lack of attentiveness in class.

**Syllabus** Please note that this syllabus is not a contract. It is a statement of expectations and information. I reserve the right to change anything in it at any time.

**Website** In addition to our Canvas site, I will maintain a website for this course at

<https://breese4410.tulane.edu>

On it, you will find class notes, assignments, and other worthwhile information. The website will be available as a resource to you even after the course ends.

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**Live Sessions** This course is being taught in-person. You will not have the option of attending class online.

**Recordings** Each live session will be recorded. I will post the recordings on Canvas the next day. Reviewing them may help with your studying. If you miss a class for some reason, you are expected to carefully watch the recorded video.

**Midterm Exam** Our midterm exam will be administered on Canvas. This will be an open-book exam and you can take it anytime between the end of class on July 11 and the start of class on July 16. It will be a timed exam. As compensation for your time taking the online exam, our class will not meet as scheduled on Friday July 12.

**Final Exam** Our final exam is scheduled for Thursday July 25 at our regular time. It will be an in-person exam.

* **Freeman Educational Norms and Expectations**

This class is in full accordance with [Freeman’s Educational Norms and Expectations](https://tulane.app.box.com/s/o9q75385zep0ad3izl91ke783wiosesb).

* **Goldman Center for Student Accessibility and ADA/Accessibility Statement**

Any students with disabilities or other needs, who need special accommodations in this course, are invited to share these concerns or requests with the instructor and should contact Goldman Center for Student Accessibility: [http://accessibility.tulane.edu](http://accessibility.tulane.edu/) or 504.862.8433.

* **Statement about Academic Integrity**

The Code of Academic Conduct applies to all undergraduate students, full-time and part-time, in Tulane University. Tulane University expects and requires behavior compatible with its high standards of scholarship. By accepting admission to the university, a student accepts its regulations (i.e., [Code of Academic Conduct](https://college.tulane.edu/code-of-academic-conduct) and [Code of Student Conduct](https://conduct.tulane.edu/resources/code-student-conduct)) and acknowledges the right of the university to take disciplinary action, including suspension or expulsion, for conduct judged unsatisfactory or disruptive.

**Tentative Schedule for FINE 3000** **Personal Finance**

Summer 2024

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| **Date** | **Topic** | **Readings** | **Assignments** |
| 6/25 | Intro  Time Value of Money | Financial Decisions | Begin Stock Trak  Begin Expense Tracking |
| 6/27 | Time Value of Money | Time Value of Money |  |
| 7/2 | Time Value of Money | Student Loans | WSJ #1 Assignment Due |
| 7/9 | Taxes  Budgeting | Budgeting | Am I Diversified? Assignment Due  WSJ #2 Assignment Due |
| 7/11 | Inflation |  |  |
| 7/11 – 16  **Online** | Midterm Exam |  |  |
| 7/16 | Insurance | Banking | Bring insurance declarations pages to class  WSJ #3 Assignment Due |
| 7/18 | Banking and Borrowing | Borrowing | Insurance Assignment Due |
| 7/19  **Friday** | Saving and Investing | Major Purchases | Credit/Debit Assignment Due |
| 7/23 | Retirement Planning |  | WSJ #4 Assignment Due  Savings Plan Assignment Due |
| 7/25 | Final Exam |  | Budget Assignment Due  Stock Trak Report Due |