

ECO 3041: Personal Finance: Spring 2019
Instructor of Record: Signè Thomas
Feedback from my Spring 2019 Personal Finance students

Feedback from students about the personal finance class as a whole:

(Note: I highlighted some of their comments—for example, when a student specifically mentions my teaching / my feedback throughout the course which helped them to learn the material.)

[The personal finance course has] opened my eyes to my own personal financing decisions. I am more aware of what I want my monthly budget to look like. I am looking at the cost of living in the cities that I'm interested in, as well as the initial job salary that I'd be starting out with. I realized how soon I will have to start saving for retirement, I am hoping to start by 23. I also really want to start investing after I graduate, and I now know the right way to go about it, and I have a good understanding of what stocks/bonds to go for. I am feeling a lot more prepared for life after college, so I appreciate all of the materials I learned within the course.

Marisel Emery, Retail Entrepreneurship major, Junior at FSU

You were a lovely teacher that truly cares about your students' future. I appreciate it!

Madison Dean, Retail Merchandising and Product Development major, Junior at FSU

You are one of the few professors I have had that bothers to provide feedback... a pleasant surprise. I would definitely recommend this class to other students; it teaches valuable life skills.

Delaney Harkins, Economics major, Senior at FSU

[T]he section about budgeting has been super helpful for me because it is something I always knew I should do, but I never knew how. The section about retirement was also really eye opening because I did not know so much planning went into saving money for the future including where to invest it and how much to invest. I had heard of terms like "IRA" and "Roth IRA", but I never knew what they meant. I have definitely viewed this course as a type of "self-help" class in the best way possible. There are so many facets of finances that I had no idea existed, and this course has made me aware of a lot of them and also got me interested in looking for more information.

I would definitely recommend this course to other students at FSU even if they are outside of my major. There was so much information in the class that you don't usually learn about on a normal basis, and this course was great for setting a nice foundation of financial knowledge.

The energy and enthusiasm you brought to the class made it a great environment for learning. It is very clear that you are passionate about your profession, and it is cool and encouraging to know that there are people like you out in the world.

Alexander Massiah, Economics major, Junior at FSU

[Y]ou were a great teacher! You are obviously very passionate and enthusiastic about teaching, and it shows in your teaching style. I've definitely started being more aware of my expenses. Thankfully, my parents support me so I'm able to gauge how I spend money and how I can cut back or re arrange. I'm a lot more interested in budgeting than I was before, and this is coming from someone who watches a lot of Dave Ramsey! In all seriousness, I've been more aware of how easy it is to spend money on things that I don't really need. Everything else – retirement, insurance, etc. – was helpful and important, and gave me some food for thought for my future. I think this is a pretty important and foundational class for students to take for adult preparation.
Max Michel, Economics major, Freshman at FSU

This class has been very helpful for making financial decisions in the future. One of the best parts is learning how to budget with the excel sheets. The homework's were very helpful and informative. Also, I learned to start investing early so my money can grow as much as possible, which I will start very soon being 21, almost 22 years old. I highly recommend this class to any students at FSU, no matter what major you are in. This is one of the best classes I have taken at FSU!

Austin Polo, Economics major, Junior at FSU

I think this is the only class I've actually enjoyed doing the homework. Every homework assignment was so applicable to real life, which makes it not only interesting but IMPORTANT. Hell, my father even asked me to send him the budget outline to send to my siblings. Don't change anything when it comes to those homework assignments, they were great.

You're a great teacher, and you seem to really like what you teach, that is somewhat rare these days so don't lose that enthusiasm because it's very appreciated by your students! Thanks for making your class an enjoyable experience. Sorry my attendance was shit! Had nothing to do with you!

Galen Postma, Economics major, Junior at FSU

This course has helped me with budgeting my own finances and where to allocate my money, but most importantly taught me the importance of my finances upon graduation in the real world. From credit (credit score, how to build it, the risks, etc.) to retirement planning (types of IRAs, when to invest, etc.) to financing and investing assets such as houses and automobiles, this course has substantially taught me real life information that I now know and can use in the future.

You were a wonderful professor. It is far and few between to have a teacher as knowledgeable, understanding, patient and relatable as yourself. It has been a pleasure. Thank you!

Taylor Stanakis, Economics major, Senior at FSU

Thank you for everything you have done for this class so far. I am learning so many useful things I will use my whole life. Thanks again

Rachel Tavolieri, Retail Entrepreneurship major, Sophomore at FSU

Thank you for all you do cause you are so greatly appreciated.

Rachel Tavolieri, Retail Entrepreneurship major, Sophomore at FSU

I definitely would recommend this course to anyone because I believe this is something that should be taught in high school but instead we learn a bunch of other irrelevant material.

Keep up the positive energy in the class. It only takes one person to change someone's whole day.

Edsel Ugalde, Commercial Entrepreneurship, Senior at FSU

From creating a budget to see just how much money I spend on a monthly (and annual) basis, to learning about different kinds of investments, this course taught me a lot and has forced me to think critically about my finances. It was well-timed as I am about to graduate and am receiving job offers, so I know to look at 401(k) plans, pay, and other benefits.

You did a fantastic job of teaching the material, despite the fact that it can be somewhat dry at times. I really enjoyed coming to class every day!

Ben van den Berg, Economics major with Minors in Business and Entrepreneurship, Senior at FSU

I think the excel assignments were very helpful and allowed me to engage with the material in a way that will help me remember it in the future. For those assignments, I didn't mind the time it took to grade them and I think feedback when there are errors is awesome and I'm pretty surprised you take the time to do that. Even when asking for homework help via email, you sent a very long and detailed explanation, and when I still didn't get it, you still replied with an even more detailed explanation; a lot of professors don't even check their email so I appreciate the time and feedback and the dedication to helping us learn.

I definitely see you are passionate about your work and you're great at it ... Thank you for being so helpful and committed to us learning the material. I really haven't had a professor commit that much time to helping me understand something.

Molly Wilkerson, Retail Entrepreneurship major, Junior at FSU

Feedback from students about how certain assignments were beneficial / helpful to enable them to learn and implement good financial habits:

(Note: I highlighted a few of the comments about the homework that really stood out.)

I really enjoyed the “Cost of Raising a Child” assignments and also “Your Credit Report” assignment. It was interesting to hear how much goes into raising a child, and it brought attention to a lot of factors I didn’t consider. It makes me realize how I really will need to be financially ready for my first child in the future. The credit report assignment was good to review and understand, as I had never gone through my own credit report before. Now I know the right, credible resources to go through to view it, as well as to understand it.

Mariel Emery, Retail Entrepreneurship major, Junior at FSU

I found the *Your Credit Report Homework* and the *I’m Rich Case Study Homework* the most useful. Understanding your credit standing is extremely important to know as it can directly impact your future. Knowing how to pull and validate your credit report are crucial life skills in my opinion and this assignment covered that. The *I’m Rich Case Study* was also useful because it demonstrated how easy it is to go from “riches to rags” if you do not know how to manage your money properly. It showed that just because you have money now that doesn’t mean that will always be the case and it is important to plan ahead to secure your future financial stability.

Delaney Harkins, Economics major, Senior at FSU

The most useful was definitely the zero-based budgeting assignment and Bureau of Labor Statistics assignments. These assignments both gave me great insights into what to expect in the future when it comes to future earnings and how to responsibly spend those earnings. The other insurance/retirement assignments were helpful and enlightening.

Max Michel, Economics major, Freshman at FSU

I think this is the only class I’ve actually enjoyed doing the homework. Every homework assignment was so applicable to real life, which makes it not only interesting but IMPORTANT. Hell, my father even asked me to send him the budget outline to send to my siblings. Don’t change anything when it comes to those homework assignments, they were great.

Galen Postma, Economics major, Junior

All homework assignments assigned throughout this semester were useful, practical, and beneficial to the real world (and our personal lives).

The most useful homework assignments I completed and why its corresponding reasonings are as follows:

1. Retirement Planning: Before taking personal finance I had no idea how important a retirement plan was, specifically right out of college during your first career. This assignment gave me insight to which options I have to invest in, and depending how much and when I

start investing, the benefits I can have if I choose to start investing in a retirement plan at an early age.

2. Roth vs. Traditional IRA: This was useful because not only did I learn the difference between the two IRA's, but I learned the pros and cons of each and which might be best for myself upon graduation. Seeing as how it is important that we start investing early, this assignment clarified which IRA might be best for us.
3. Power of Compound Interest: This assignment stuck out of me because before taking this course I was not aware of the importance of investing and acquiring a retirement plan right away. That being said, I did not realize that impact compound interest has especially if investing starts immediately. I am glad I learned the importance of compound interest in this assignment.
4. Budget after College: For me, I am not always the best with budgeting my finances which is something I have to improve on in the immediate future. This assignment brought to my attention the various daily and life time expenses one incurs throughout their life and the large sum they total all together. The total sum of these expenses and the money I had to work with for a given salary were bigger than I thought which allowed me to realize the importance of creating a budget after college and sticking to it to maintain financial stability.

Taylor Stanakis, Economics major, Senior at FSU

The most useful HW assignments were the zero-based budget activity, both during and after college. I really liked these because I had previously no idea how expensive I was! I am lucky that my parents help me with so many of my expenses and it also showed me that I could do make investments in any money that's just sitting in my checking account, whether that be retirement or into a savings account. I also really enjoyed the compound interest activity because both of my parents came to the U.S. later in life and its astonishing to see the disadvantage they had compared to people who were raised in the U.S. their whole life.

Those assignments were beneficial, it allowed for free thought. I could tell that you put in so much thought into each comment and I really appreciated it, it showed that you were investing a lot of your time and that I should reciprocate by investing my time.

Pablo Torres, Economics and Psychology major, Junior at FSU

I felt that every homework assignment helped us gain a deeper understanding of what we were being taught.

The power of compound interest assignment helped to visualize how much money you can have for retirement if you start saving early, and the advice for the professional athlete one allowed us to put our education to use through advising. Both were practical for real-life application.

Ben van den Berg, Economics major with Minors in Business and Entrepreneurship, Senior at FSU

The zero based budget during college assignment was very helpful because it showed me for the first time where my money is going and made me realize how often I make careless financial decisions. I had never heard of a zero based budget before and didn't think about how carefully money should be spent and planned in order to build up savings, which has become a goal for me.

I also thought the Your Credit Report homework was helpful because it showed me my loans for the first time, and I was able to make a loose plan about paying them in the future. I also have never seen my credit report, and being able to access that information and see my expenses was interesting. I don't think I would have accessed it for many years without this assignment.

I don't have a full plan for after college yet, but I know the value of budgeting, having insurance, and setting up a retirement fund. Those are the things that will stick with me the most since I have seen how they can benefit me through the course material. I want to set up a retirement plan once I receive my first job, and I want to use a zero based budget so I can be more mindful of how I spend my money. This has also taught me how important my time is, because I often go to work and then immediately spend the money, but I now see that makes my time feel wasted.

I think the excel assignments were very helpful and allowed me to engage with the material in a way that will help me remember it in the future. For those assignments, I didn't mind the time it took to grade them and I think feedback when there are errors is awesome and I'm pretty surprised you take the time to do that. Even when asking for homework help via email, you sent a very long and detailed explanation, and when I still didn't get it, you still replied with an even more detailed explanation; a lot of professors don't even check their email so I appreciate the time and feedback and the dedication to helping us learn.

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Molly Wilkerson, Retail Entrepreneurship major, Junior at FSU