

Your Money or Your Life
Empowering Students through Financial Literacy and Consumer Advocacy
Department, Course Number, and Section
Class Meeting Time(s) and Location(s)
Semester

Instructor(s) name(s) and contact information, e.g.
Email address
Office location; phone
Office hours

<Instructors may want to indicate which is their preferred mode of contact (email, phone, etc), as well as when and how students can expect a reply to any electronic communication.>
<Consider adding contact Information for graduate students, staff, or other individuals providing course support here, or on a separate document.>

Course Description

This course is designed to not only teach you basic concepts in financial literacy, like budgeting and filing your taxes, but also engage you as a student and citizen in the greater context of what lacking financial literacy means, and why the current system is broken. You will gain a larger understanding of what problems University of Maryland and other university campuses face pertaining to a lack of financial literacy, what problems currently exist in personal finances from a national perspective, and consumer advocacy. Then, it is our goal to ensure you leave this course knowing how you can make a difference and change the current system.

Course Goals

Students who complete this course successfully will:

- Have knowledge of the issues facing college students pertaining to money such as food and housing insecurity, and student debt
- Learn how to handle their personal finances as a student and beyond
- Be aware of the problems of the current financial structure in the U.S. and how it affects them and others
- Gain an understanding of what consumer advocacy is and how it can change the current broken system
- Understand what they, as an active student and an engaged citizen, can do to help combat the issues in their community and beyond related to financial literacy

Required Texts, Materials, or Equipment:

- *****IDEALLY, ANY BOOKS ARE FREE OR SIGNIFICANTLY CHEAPER*****
 - Examples: Customer Advocacy: When You Care, People Notice, Financial Literacy for Millennials: A Practical Guide to Managing Your Financial Life for Teens, College Students, and Young Adults
- iGrad and the Financial aid office website (<https://www.financialaid.umd.edu/literacy/>)

Daily Work/Homework

There will be four disbursed reflections due throughout the semester. Each should be between 300-500 words reflecting on material read and information taught from the previous week. These reflections should NOT be summaries. Each must add personal value to what you've learned

In addition, there will be one film reflection assignment due during the semester. This will be a maximum of 400 words, answering the following questions.

1. What new information did you learn from the film?
2. What did you find surprising or interesting?
3. Did this change your view on the topic? Why or why not?

Films may include:

- Maxed Out: Hard Times, Easy Credit and the Era of Predatory Lenders
- The Ordinance: Texas Churches vs. The Payday Loan Industry
- The Big Short
- A Place at the Table (Food Insecurity in the United States)
- Inside Job (Financial Crisis of 2008)

Major Assignments: Descriptions

****A few ideas, but defer to the professor teaching the course ****

1. Career Planning and Personal Budget Assignment (15%)

Students will be required to research their intended career field and potential job positions of interest to them after graduation. They will then choose a job position, find salary information for the state of Maryland pertaining to this job, and research their expected living expenses (aspects that will be talked about at length during Week 4's lecture). This will then be turned into a budget through Excel/Google Sheets to demonstrate personally for each student what their goals should be for spending and saving. This assignment will hopefully be utilized outside of class, either directly or from gains in skills and understanding.

2. Consumer Credit Report (10%)

Students will be required to research their credit scores, reasons why it is low or high, and ways in which they can personally improve them. It will also be required of students to find at least three credit cards and evaluate them for their yearly fees, interest rates, payback requirements, and other aspects. Then, it will be necessary to compile this information into a page long, single spaced response in the style of a report. This can include tables, lists, and paragraphs. This report can then be used by the student for understanding of where their credit stands, how to improve their credit and which credit cards they should and shouldn't consider.

3. Final Group Consumer Advocacy Project (30%)

The final group consumer advocacy project is an essential part of the class. Students will be in groups as large as six people and they may be self selected. In each group, students are expected to select a topic related to consumer advocacy and create a solution to a problem they feel is significant. This can be an issue in the course material or something the group personally is passionate about. Examples of potential issues students can focus on include:

- Payday lending, discriminatory lending
- Student Loans, Credit Card Debt
- Food insecurity

- Mortgages, Housing Insecurity, Discriminatory Housing Practices (Redlining, gentrification, etc.)

Each group must cover a different issue for the sake of unique presentations. Issues can have a broad range, but students will be encouraged to relate the material to the UMD campus and its student body. Solutions can include a number of ideas, such as non-profit advocacy, community engagement, enhancing resources for education, and many others. This project can be in the form of a powerpoint presentation, video project, interactive class activity, or any other reasonable and creative means of presentation. They are expected to be engaging and will be graded by both their peers and the professor.

4. Food Budget Assignment (5%)

Students are to begin a budget sheet through google drive to be updated progressively through the semester. Basic requirements include setting goals for money spent on grocery shopping and dining out. Students should periodically record their spending and evaluate their progress to stay in line with these goals. In order to receive full credit, students must submit the google sheet with evidence of changes throughout the semester (dates are recorded as to when the sheet was altered through google sheets) and a brief 250-400 word typed reflection and evaluation of actual spending compared to planned spending. **This is to be started after Week 4: Budgeting and Career Planning and due at the end of the semester.**

Class Participation

Attendance and Engagement

Students are expected to attend and participate in all classes. Attendance will be taken randomly at six different times during the semester. Engagement means that you are not on your cellphones, and laptops are not permitted in class unless with the specific permission of the professor and/or on days in which workshops and in-class assignments are held in class. If guest speakers are in the room, it is expected of students to pay attention and be respectful.

Examples of workshops, classroom activities, and guest lectures

- In Class Financial Planning and Retirement Workshop
- Class Activity on Technological Currencies: Evaluating Bitcoin
- Guest Lectures from local non-profits working on food insecurity, experts on homelessness and housing insecurity, financial aid office representatives, etc.

Student Led Discussion

As part of the participation grade, students are expected to work together in assigned groups to prepare and lead a discussion in class on the topic for that class period. The class will be split in half, with half of the group discussing in a circle with one group and the same for the other. Students in the group leading the discussion for that day must contribute to the questions that will be asked and content covered. All students should come to class having read the material and have an understanding of what will be discussed. During discussion, students are encouraged to raise their hands and participate. All interactions must be civil, respectful, and supportive of an inclusive learning environment for all students.

Course Grading

Explanation of Grading System

- Projects (60%)
- Homework (20%)
- Class Participation (20%)
 - Attendance and Engagement in Lecture (15% of total grade)
 - Student Led Discussion (5% of total grade)

Course-Specific Support or Supplementary Instruction

WE HOPE TO EXPAND THIS SECTION THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS WITH OTHER ON CAMPUS AGENCIES AND ORGANIZATIONS. For example:

- iGrad and Office of Student Financial Aid
- One on one support with Help Center
- Food Security education with Food Co-op and Campus Pantry
- Advocacy MaryPIRG

Course Policies and Information for Students

Late Policy

Unless you see me in advance of the due date and obtain an approved excuse, 5 percent of the total possible points will be deducted from your score for every day the assignment is late, including weekend days. (So, for example, on a 100-point scale, a student who would have earned a 94 on a timely paper will earn 89 if the same paper is turned in one day late, 84 if turned in 2 days late, etc.).

Attendance and Absences

In accordance with University policy, students are expected to attend classes regularly and on-time. Be mindful that coming to class late interrupts the session, and can be rude when accommodating guest speakers and final projects. Attendance will be taken randomly six times out of the semester, to encourage you to attend every lecture. You are also required to attend lecture and participate as it is a significant component of your overall grade (20%). An absence will only be considered excused under the circumstances described by the University's attendance policy, available at:

<http://www.umd.edu/catalog/index.cfm/show/content.section/c/27/ss/1584/s/1540>.

Academic Accommodations

Academic Integrity

The University of Maryland has a nationally recognized Code of Academic Integrity, administered by the Student Honor Council. It prohibits students from cheating on exams, plagiarizing papers, submitting the same paper for credit in two courses without authorization, buying papers, and other offenses. Plagiarism is defined as "intentionally or knowingly representing the words or ideas of another as one's own in any academic exercise." Violations will be reported directly to the Student Honor Council if suspected: <http://www.shc.umd.edu>. The

following resources may be of further assistance: UMD's Academic Integrity Module (<http://training2.reslife.umd.edu/AcademicIntegrity/index.html>) and Avoiding Plagiarism from MIT's Writing Center (<http://writing.mit.edu/wcc/avoidingplagiarism>). Keep in mind that plagiarism is not only a concern on college campuses, but in all walks of life:

<http://www.politico.com/gallery/2014/07/10-high-profile-plagiarism-cases-001770?slide=0>.

Diversity

The University of Maryland values the diversity of its student body. Along with the University, I am committed to providing a classroom atmosphere that encourages the equitable participation of all students regardless of age, disability, ethnicity, gender, national origin, race, religion, or sexual orientation. In this course, we might discuss potentially sensitive or controversial issues. It is therefore essential to be respectful and considerate of all your peers and the perspectives they bring to these issues.

Preliminary Schedule of Topics, Readings, and Assignments

Date	Topics/Assigned Readings/Homework	Major Assignments and Deadlines
Week 1	Introduction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Course Overview, Syllabus Review - Why You Should Care: Introduction to Problems in Financial Illiteracy at UMD and beyond 	
Week 2	Basics of Personal Finance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - (Guest Lecture) speak on the aspects of Finance - In - class Q & A for clarification 	Reflection Due
Week 3	Understanding the Campus and National Context <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Examining financial literacy at UMD - Problems that are present here and nationally - Economic, political, and social framing 	
Week 4	Budgeting and Career Planning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The basics of creating and managing a budget - Understanding salaries and planning for entry and advancement in the workforce 	Begin Food Budget Assignment Reflection Due
Week 5	Taxation and the American Political System <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How do we create a more fair and equitable tax system?: Structure of the current system, issues and controversies, and what you can do about it - Personal tax strategy workshop 	Student Led Discussion on Political System and Taxation (Group #) Career Planning and Budget Assignment Due
Week 6	Personal Security and Financial Literacy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Food insecurity, housing insecurity, and student loan debt 	
Week 7	Guest Panel on Personal Security and Financial Literacy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Guest experts in fields relating to food insecurity, homelessness and housing security, and college student loans and debt 	Reflection Due

Week 8	Consumer Credit and Predatory Lending <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The basics of credit: What is credit, how does it affect you, how does it change, etc. - Credit Cards, Loans, and Debt - Predatory and Discriminatory Lending 	Student Led Discussion on Predatory Lending (Group #)
Week 9	Insurance: Housing and Health <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Housing and auto insurance - Health and life insurance 	Consumer Credit Project Due
Week 10	Consumer Advocacy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reexamining the way we view our roles in the economic system of the United States 	Reflection Due
Week 11	Wealth Generation and Investment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stock market and personal investment - Possible activity: fun discussion on techno-currencies 	Film Reflection Due Evaluating Techno-Currencies In-Class Activity
Week 12	Financial Planning and Retirement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Understanding savings and budgeting into the future - 401k, social security, and understanding security into retirement years 	In Class Financial Planning and Retirement Workshop
Week 13	The Pay Gap and Issues of Inequality in the Context of the Financial System <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dive deeper into issues affecting women and particularly minorities in the current system - Proposing solutions to these problems and offering recommendations to each other related to consumer advocacy and activism 	Student Led Discussion on Material (Group #)
Week 14	Final Group Consumer Advocacy Presentations	Final Group Consumer Advocacy Project
Week 15	Final Group Consumer Advocacy Presentations / Reflection on Course Material	Final Group Consumer Advocacy Project Food Budget Project Due