

Syllabus
FYC 4003 – Personal and Family Financial Counseling
3 Credit Hours

Instructor	Course Information
<p>Instructor: Jorge Ruiz-Menjivar, PhD</p> <p>Communication Policy: For any email communication during the term, please contact me through the Canvas Inbox only. Do not use external email addresses for course-related matters.</p> <p>Disclaimer: The instructor reserves the right to modify the syllabus as necessary to achieve the course’s learning objectives.</p>	<p>Term: Spring 2026</p> <p>Call number: 25490</p> <p>Delivery Model: Fully Online Asynchronous</p> <p>Class Dates: 01/12/2026 – 04/22/2026</p> <p>Office Hours</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tuesday: 10:00-12:00h (ET)• Wednesday: 13:00-15:00h (ET)• Thursday: 15:00-14:30h (ET) <p><i>Note:</i> See the Canvas course to access the link to schedule virtual office hours.</p>

Accredited Financial Counselor (AFC®):

This course is part of the core curriculum for the University of Florida’s AFCPE Registered Education Program with the Association for Financial Counseling and Planning Education (AFCPE®). For more information about AFCPE and obtaining your Accredited Financial Counselor (AFC®) designation through the AFCPE Registered Education Program pathway, please visit www.afcpe.org



“Courses using materials costing \$20 or less per credit hour are eligible to receive the Affordable UF Badge. The badge allows students to easily identify courses with low-cost materials.”

Course Description:

An examination of family economics and resource management issues and impact on the well-being of families across the major transitions of the family life cycle. The complex process of financial decision-making and the role of the financial counselor are addressed.

Prerequisites: FYC 3005-Introduction to Personal and Family Financial Planning.

Course Overview:

Developing financial knowledge and counseling skills is integral to the preparation and foundation of professionals who will work with families. Many individuals and families struggle with finances – the role of the financial counselor is to assist individuals and families in the complex process of financial decision-making.

Course Objectives:

After completing this course, the student will be able to:

- Utilize counseling skills and apply knowledge, resources, and financial strategies to various financial counseling scenarios.
- Understand the strategic approach to financial counseling.
- Understand the field and profession of financial counseling.
- Educate clients on sound financial principles.
- Assist clients in the process of overcoming their financial indebtedness.
- Identify and suggest modifications for ineffective money management behaviors.
- Develop successful strategies for achieving a client's financial goals.

Required Materials:

This is a 100% online, asynchronous course. You will complete all coursework, quizzes, and discussions using a computer that must have a built-in or connectable camera and microphone, speakers, wireless internet access, and the ability to connect to the GatorLink VPN. Please note that tablets and Chromebooks may be helpful as supplemental devices, but UF does not recommend relying on cell phones, tablets, or Chromebooks as your primary computer.

- For information about student computer recommendations, visit: <https://it.ufl.edu/get-help/student-computer-recommendations/>
- For VPN documentation and connection instructions, see: <https://it.ufl.edu/ict/documentation/network-infrastructure/vpn/>
- Canvas e-Learning has minimum browser requirements. For more information, visit: <https://elearning.ufl.edu/student-help/student-help-faqs/>

Required Textbooks¹:

Durband, D. B., Law, R. & Mazzolini, A. (Eds.). (2018). *Financial Counseling*. Cham, Switzerland: Springer.

National Consumer Law Center®. (2019). *Guide to Surviving Debt* (11th ed.). Boston, MA: National Consumer Law Center.

Suggested Text:

Garman, T. & Forgue, R. (2012). *Personal Finance*, (11th Edition). Mason, OH: South-Western Cengage Learning.

*Additional Readings:*

An article reading list will be available online via the e-Learning platform. You will be responsible for locating and reading the articles.

Methods of Evaluation:

There are several types of required assignments related to budgeting, credit, insurance, retirement, and investment throughout the semester. Detailed instructions and deadlines are posted on e-Learning.

- A. **Assignments:** Five assignments related to money attitudes and beliefs, financial counseling, budgeting, balance sheets, cash-flow statements, financial ratios, goals worksheets, and credit and debt will be completed throughout the semester.
- B. **Discussions:** During the semester, students will participate in 5 discussion forums via Canvas. We will discuss 20 articles relevant to the content covered in this course—that is, five articles per discussion forum. At least two moderators have been assigned for each discussion forum. Moderators will post “discussion” questions and moderate the discussion blogs. All students are required to participate and actively engage in these discussions. Students are responsible for locating and reading the assigned articles.
- C. **Financial Education Article (FEA):** You will write an article on a financial topic of your choice (e.g., banking and saving, credit and credit cards, budgeting, planning, and recordkeeping). The subject of your financial article should be timely and relevant to the current financial marketplace, as the primary purpose of this assignment is to produce an educational resource that consumers can utilize. Examples of existing and similar educational resources can be found in the Money Matter Section of the EDIS website—a comprehensive, single-source repository of peer-reviewed publications developed by faculty and researchers at UF/IFAS (<https://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/family-resources/money->

¹ Important information about required textbooks:

a) The digital version of the “Surviving Debt” (2025 edition) book is available for free through the National Consumer Law Center. You can access it at: <https://library.nclc.org/book/surviving-debt>

b) Any format of the *Financial Counseling* book is acceptable. The most affordable option is the eBook (instant download), priced at \$49.99 plus tax. To purchase the eBook, use the following link: <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-319-72586-4>

[matters/](#)). You will develop this article throughout the semester. First, you will write an annotated outline for the topic of your choice (note that the instructor must approve this topic). Second, you will submit a complete draft of the article. I will ask Extension agents to provide feedback and revisions for the paper. Finally, you will submit a final version of the article—this version should be ready for submission to the peer-review process of EDIS publication (see e-learning for more information about requirements for EDIS submissions).

D. **Exams:** Two exams will be given during the semester.

Grades:

Grades will be based on the following criteria:

Assignments (40 points each)	200 pts
Discussions (30 points for each blog)	150 pts
FEA (50pts outline; 100pts draft; 200pts final)	350 pts
Exams (150 points each)	300 pts
TOTAL COURSE POINTS	1000 PTS

Grading Summary: Grades in this class will be based on the following scale:

Letter Grade	Percentage
A	= 93.00% and above
A-	= 90.00-92.99%
B+	= 87.00-89.99%
B	= 83.00-86.99%
B-	= 80.00-82.99%
C+	= 77.00-79.99%
C	= 73.00-76.99%
C-	= 70.00-72.99%
D+	= 67.00-69.99%
D	= 63.00-66.99%
D-	= 60.00-62.99%
E	= 59.99% and below

All of the following must be true for the student to be eligible to receive a grade of "I." The student has completed a major portion of the coursework with a passing grade (D or better), the student is unable to complete course requirements because of documented circumstances beyond their control, and the student and instructor have discussed the situation prior to the final exam (except under emergency conditions).

APA Formatting Guidelines

Use the APA Style Guide, 7th Edition, to complete all assignments and tasks in this course. Use proper APA formatting for all components of an assignment, including in-text citations, tables, figures, appendices, section headings, titles, abstracts, and references. The FYCS Department has chosen to use the Professional title page guidelines, *not the student title page format*. Guidelines for formatting can be found in:

Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (7 ed.). (2019). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Note: Many citation generators and APA guides are available online. While these can be good resources, they often produce citations that are incomplete or incorrectly formatted. If you use a citation generator for your work, it would be wise to review the references to ensure they are formatted correctly before submitting your assignment. *The only source that ensures 100% compliance with APA style is the APA Publication Manual itself.*

Communication Policy

- **Email inquiries:** Please only contact me via Canvas or your UF email account. UF policies prohibit me from discussing your grade through any other email servers.
- **Response time:** I will respond to email inquiries within 24-48 hours during business days. Questions submitted during the weekend will be answered within 48 hours of the next business day.
- **Virtual Office Hours (via Zoom):** Refer to Canvas for more details.

Makeup Work:

Requirements for makeup exams, assignments, and other work are consistent with university policies that can be found at:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx> You will need to provide documentation to excuse your absence for makeup exams and assignments. It is the responsibility of the student to know and understand all material that may be used in a quiz or exam.

Policy Regarding Late Work

All assignments must be submitted via Canvas by the date and time indicated on the course calendar and Canvas. Late work is accepted at the course instructor's discretion and will only be approved in cases consistent with the university policies found above.

Regarding Religious Holidays:

The university calendar does not include observance of any religious holidays. The Florida Board of Governors and state law govern university policy regarding the observance of religious holidays. Students shall be excused from class or other scheduled academic activity to observe a religious holy day of their faith with prior notification to the instructor. Students shall be permitted a reasonable amount of time to make up the material or activities covered in their absence. Students shall not be penalized due to absence from class or other scheduled academic activities because of religious observances. <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/dates-deadlines/pdfs/>

Academic Honesty Policy:

As a student at the University of Florida, you have committed yourself to upholding the Honor Code, which includes the following pledge: *"We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity."* You are expected to exhibit behavior consistent with this commitment to the UF academic community. On all work submitted for credit at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: *"On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment."*

Moreover, academic honesty includes, for specific assignments such as exams, essays, discussions, and papers, abstaining from using text written by a generation system and presenting it as one's own work (e.g., entering a prompt into an artificial intelligence tool and using the output in an assignment).

(a) Cheating. A Student shall not use or attempt to use unauthorized materials or resources in any academic activity for academic advantage or benefit. Cheating includes but is not limited to:

1. Using any materials or resources prepared by another person or Entity without the other person or Entity's express Consent or without proper attribution to the other person or Entity.

Entity defined as: This includes but is not limited to generative artificial intelligence, large language models, content generation bots, or other non-human intelligence or digital tools.

It is assumed that you will complete all work independently in each course unless the instructor explicitly permits you to collaborate on course tasks (e.g., assignments, papers, quizzes, exams). Furthermore, as part of your obligation to uphold the Honor Code, you should report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to the appropriate personnel. It is your individual responsibility to know and comply with all university policies and procedures regarding academic integrity and the Student Honor Code. Violations of the Honor Code at the University of Florida will not be tolerated. Violations will be reported to the Dean of Students Office for consideration of disciplinary action. For more information regarding the student honor code, please see: <https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/>

About ChatGPT and other AI-generated text systems

Particularly, in this class, you are NOT allowed to use ChatGPT and other AI-generated text systems to conduct literature reviews, formally write the outline or body of FEA, develop and create responses for the Discussion questions and threads, and/or complete the exams.

Academic studies have shown that these tools do a poor and questionable job when summarizing evidence-based literature about a particular issue, presenting reliable and up-to-date statistics, synthesizing the body of knowledge supported by peer-reviewed studies, and providing relevant and trusted citations that support claims or arguments generated.

Below are three articles that discuss some of the issues and limitations of AI-generated text tools:

Haman, M., & Školník, M. (2023). Using ChatGPT to conduct a literature review. *Accountability in Research*, 1-3. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08989621.2023.2185514>

Najafali, D., Camacho, J. M., Reiche, E., Galbraith, L., Morrison, S. D., & Dorafshar, A. H. (2023). Truth or lies? The pitfalls and limitations of ChatGPT in systematic review creation. *Aesthetic Surgery Journal*, sjad093. <https://doi.org/10.1093/asj/sjad093>

Tlili, A., Shehata, B., Adarkwah, M. A., Bozkurt, A., Hickey, D. T., Huang, R., & Agyemang, B. (2023). What if the devil is my guardian angel: ChatGPT as a case study of using chatbots in education. *Smart Learning Environments*, 10(1), 15. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40561-023-00237-x>

You may utilize AI tools outside of class to get additional clarification on a concept that might have been confusing. However, I encourage you to be a critical consumer of output generated by these tools and employ a fair degree of skepticism about the accuracy of the information presented. You may also use AI tools for proofreading (after providing detailed instructions), informally brainstorming key ideas about a particular issue or problem, and classifying and organizing input data.

Online Course Evaluation Process:

Student assessment of instruction is an essential part of efforts to improve teaching and learning. At the end of the semester, students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course using a standard set of university and college criteria. These evaluations are conducted online at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open for students to complete during the last two or three weeks of the semester; students will be notified of the specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results>.

Troubleshooting Technical Issues

Students should contact the UF Help Desk at 352-392-HELP/4357 or helpdesk@ufl.edu with all technical issues. Some issues may be resolved using resources on the Help Desk website: helpdesk.ufl.edu. Do not contact the instructor or TA to help you solve a technical issue. If a technical issue impedes your ability to submit an assignment on time, email the instructor explaining the situation and provide your UFIT ticket number (assigned to you by the Help Desk). Accommodations will not be made for technical issues unless a UFIT ticket number is provided.

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the Disability Resource Center by visiting <https://disability.ufl.edu/students/get-started/>. It is essential for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs as early as possible in the semester.

Policy Regarding Testing Accommodations

- Any student who requires testing accommodations must follow university procedures for securing the accommodations. Please see <https://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/students> for information on accessing resources and setting up accommodations.
- Students who require testing accommodations should follow DRC policy for making an appointment to take the test(s) at the DRC. Do not assume that I can provide additional assistance for testing needs. If you fail to follow through on making arrangements with the DRC to take a test, you will take the test with the rest of the class and will be given the same amount of time to take the test as the rest of the course.

In-Class Recording Policy

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the University, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.

A “class lecture” is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session.

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third-party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040, Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.

Software Use Policy:

All faculty, staff, and students of the university are required and expected to obey the laws and legal agreements governing software use. Failure to do so can lead to monetary damages and/or criminal penalties for the individual violator. Because such violations are also against university policies and rules, disciplinary action will be taken as appropriate.

Campus Helping Resources

Students experiencing crises or personal problems that interfere with their general well-being are encouraged to utilize the University's resources. The following resources are available at no cost for currently enrolled students. Resources are available on campus for students having personal problems or lacking clear career or academic goals, which interfere with their academic performance.

Health and Wellness Resources

- *U Matter, We Care*: If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu, 352-392-1575, or visit umatter.ufl.edu/ to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.
- *Counseling and Wellness Center*: Visit counseling.ufl.edu/ or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services.
- *Student Health Care Center*: Call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information to help you find the care you need, or visit shcc.ufl.edu/.
- *University Police Department*: Visit police.ufl.edu/ or call 352-392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).
- *UF Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center*: For immediate medical care, call 352-733-0111 or go to the emergency room at 1515 SW Archer Road, Gainesville, FL 32608; ufhealth.org/emergency-room-trauma-center.

Academic Resources

- *E-learning technical support*: Contact the UF Computing Help Desk at 352-392-4357 or via e-mail at helpdesk@ufl.edu.
- *Career Connections Center*: Reitz Union Suite 1300, 352-392-1601. Career assistance and counseling services career.ufl.edu/.
- *Library Support*: cms.uflib.ufl.edu/ask various ways to receive assistance concerning using the libraries or finding resources.
- *Teaching Center*: Broward Hall, 352-392-2010, or to make an appointment 352- 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring. teachingcenter.ufl.edu/
- *Writing Studio*: 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers. writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/
- *Student Complaints On-Campus*: sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/

Course: FYC 4003

Term: Spring 2026

Instructor: Jorge Ruiz-Menjivar, Ph.D.

Course Schedule*:

Week	Topics	Reading	Assignment**
1	<input type="checkbox"/> Overview of course <input type="checkbox"/> Introductions <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-assessment (non-graded) <input type="checkbox"/> What young adults need to know about money <input type="checkbox"/> Introduction to Financial Counseling <input type="checkbox"/> Personal finance competencies in the practice of financial counseling <input type="checkbox"/> The practice of financial counseling	Chapters 1, 2, and 3(FC)	Introduction Sheet (10 pts. Extra Credit) Pre-Test: General Financial Literacy Test (non-graded) due on January 20 (17:00h)
2	<input type="checkbox"/> Choosing which debts to pay first <input type="checkbox"/> Reducing expenses <input type="checkbox"/> Options for increasing your income <input type="checkbox"/> Keeping track of income, expenses, and debt	Chapter 1 (SD-2016) Chapters 1, 8, 9, 10 (SD)	Assignment 1 (Budget and financial goals)

* Instructor reserves the right to change the syllabus at any time. Any changes will be announced during class.

** All assignments are due on Friday (at 17h) of the week indicated on the course schedule unless stated otherwise in the course schedule.

3	<input type="checkbox"/> What You Need to Know About Your Credit Report <input type="checkbox"/> Taking out new loans to pay for old debts <input type="checkbox"/> Choices to avoid at all costs	Chapters 3, 5, and 7 (SD)	
4	<input type="checkbox"/> A systematic approach to understanding diversity in financial counseling <input type="checkbox"/> The importance of self-awareness for financial counselors and clients <input type="checkbox"/> The Pros and Cons of Credit Counseling and Other “Debt Relief” Companies	Chapters 4 and 5 (FC) Chapter 4 (SD-2016)	FEA[†] topic and annotated outline submission Discussion #1 posts
5	<input type="checkbox"/> Credit card debt <input type="checkbox"/> Responding to debt collectors <input type="checkbox"/> Collection lawsuits <input type="checkbox"/> Time Value of Money (TVM)	Chapters 2, 4, and 12 (SD) Readings on TVM available on eLearning	Assignment 2 (Credit Cards) TVM Assignment due (40 pts. Extra Credit)
6	<input type="checkbox"/> Classic theories for use in financial counseling <input type="checkbox"/> Contemporary theories and frameworks for use in financial counseling	Chapters 6 and 7 (FC)	

[†] Financial Education Article (FEA)

7	<input type="checkbox"/> Medical debt <input type="checkbox"/> Utility terminations <input type="checkbox"/> Car loans and repossessions <input type="checkbox"/> Key communication and physical environment concepts for financial counselors	Chapters 11, 14, and 15 (SD) Chapter 8 (FC)	Exam 1 Discussion #2 posts
8	<input type="checkbox"/> Frameworks for financial decision-making <input type="checkbox"/> Making the science practical: Behavioral interventions in practice <input type="checkbox"/> Decision-making and problem-solving <input type="checkbox"/> Financial Assessments	Chapter 9 and 10 (FC) Chapter 7 (PP)	Assignment 3 (Balance Sheet & Cash Flow)
9	<input type="checkbox"/> Student loans <input type="checkbox"/> Federal income tax debt	Chapters 13 and 23 (SD)	Discussion #3 posts
10	Spring Break	Spring Break	Spring Break
11	<input type="checkbox"/> What every homeowner should know about mortgage payments <input type="checkbox"/> Property taxes and tax sales <input type="checkbox"/> Identifying problematic financial behaviors and money disorders	Chapters 16 and 19 (SD) Chapter 11 (FC)	FEA[†] draft submission Discussion #4 posts

[†] Financial Education Article (FEA)

12	<input type="checkbox"/> When you are having trouble making mortgage payments <input type="checkbox"/> Defending your home from foreclosure <input type="checkbox"/> Managing challenging conversations with financial counseling clients	Chapters 17 and 18 (SD) Chapter 12 (FC)	
13	<input type="checkbox"/> Resources and tools for use in financial counseling <input type="checkbox"/> Looking forward: the future of financial counseling <input type="checkbox"/> Reverse Mortgages <input type="checkbox"/> Evictions and getting out of a lease	Chapters 13 and 14 (FC) Chapters 6 and 20 (SD)	Assignment 4 (credit report)
14	<input type="checkbox"/> Civil court judgment debt <input type="checkbox"/> Debts related to criminal law <input type="checkbox"/> How the bankruptcy process works <input type="checkbox"/> Deciding whether and when to file for bankruptcy	Chapters 21, 22, 24, and 25 (SD)	Discussion #5 posts FEA [†] final submission due April 10 (17:00h)

[†] Financial Education Article (FEA)

15	Post-assessment (non-graded) * Reading days: April 23 and 24 – No Classes*		Post-Test: General Financial Literacy Test due April 22 (17:00h)
16			Exam 2 due Monday, March 27 (17:00h)

Required books:

- Durband, D. B., Law, R. & Mazzolini, A. (Eds.). (2018). *Financial Counseling*. Cham, Switzerland: Springer. **(FC)**
- National Consumer Law Center. (2019). *Guide to Surviving Debt*. **(SD)**

Supplemental books***:

- Pulvino, C., Lee, J., & Pulvino, C. (2010). *Financial Counseling: A Strategic Approach*. **(PP)**
- National Consumer Law Center. (2016). *Guide to Surviving Debt*. (SD-2016) **(SD-2016)**

*** Copy of assigned chapters will be made available via e-learning.