Financial Management and Goal Alignment

Spring 2025 Syllabus

# Course Overview

This course is designed to provide foundational financial skills while aligning your financial strategies with your personal and professional goals. By mastering budgeting, investing, and wealth-building techniques, you will develop a clear roadmap to achieve financial security and leverage your resources to support causes and goals that matter most to you.

* **Credits:** 3
* **Format:** Mixed (MOOC + Lab)
* **Schedule:**

# Course Objectives

1. Build and maintain a personalized budget to manage income and expenses effectively.
2. Understand the basics of investing and develop a long-term wealth-building strategy.
3. Align financial planning with personal, professional, and philanthropic goals.
4. Identify opportunities to use your finances as a tool for impact and growth.

# Assignments & Activities

**1. Budgeting and Expense Management**

* **Create a Personal Budget (Weeks 1-2)**:
  + Use tools like *YNAB* or *Mint* to track income and expenses.
  + Categorize spending and identify areas for adjustment.
* **Expense Audit (Week 3)**:
  + Analyze the past three months of spending.
  + Identify patterns, unnecessary expenses, and potential savings.

**2. Investing Basics**

* **Investment Research (Weeks 4-5)**:
  + Explore different types of investments (e.g., index funds, real estate, stocks).
  + Use resources like *Morningstar* or *Investopedia* to understand risks and rewards.
* **Create an Investment Plan (Week 6)**:
  + Set short-term and long-term investment goals.
  + Determine risk tolerance and identify suitable investment vehicles.

**3. Wealth Building and Goal Setting**

* **Net Worth Assessment (Week 7)**:
  + Calculate your current net worth and set growth targets.
* **Wealth-Building Strategy (Week 8)**:
  + Develop a plan for increasing income, reducing debt, and building assets.

**4. Financial Goal Alignment**

* **Philanthropic Budget (Weeks 9-10)**:
  + Designate a percentage of income for causes you care about.
  + Research opportunities to support these causes effectively.
* **Big-Picture Financial Vision (Weeks 11-12)**:
  + Create a document aligning your financial strategy with life goals (e.g., travel, education, career milestones).
  + Include actionable steps to integrate finances with your broader aspirations.

# Course Schedule

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Week** | **Focus Area** | **Activity/Deliverable** |
| 1-2 | Budgeting Basics | Create a personalized budget. |
| 3 | Expense Audit | Review and optimize spending habits. |
| 4-5 | Investment Research | Study investment options and strategies. |
| 6 | Investment Planning | Develop a personalized investment plan. |
| 7 | Net Worth Assessment | Calculate net worth and set growth targets. |
| 8 | Wealth-Building Strategy | Outline steps for income and asset growth. |
| 9-10 | Philanthropic Budget | Allocate funds for causes and research impact. |
| 11-12 | Big-Picture Financial Vision | Align financial planning with life goals. |

# Recommended Materials

## Books

* **Required**: *I Will Teach You to Be Rich* by Ramit Sethi
* **Recommended**:
  + *The Total Money Makeover* by Dave Ramsey
  + *The Simple Path to Wealth* by JL Collins
  + *Investopedia* for financial education.

## Media

* *Mr. Money Mustache* blog for frugality and financial independence.

## Apps & Tools

* **Required**:
  + Budgeting: Credit Karma
  + FIRE spreadsheet template (Excel)
  + Philanthropy: GiveWell
  + Kiva
* **Recommended**:
  + Investing: Morningstar
  + FIREcalc (app)

## Communities

* Nerdfighteria on Kiva
* Bogleheads/Vanguard Diehards

# Final Deliverables

1. **Personal Budget**: A detailed budget reflecting income, expenses, and savings goals.
2. **Investment Plan**: A strategy outlining short-term and long-term investment targets.
3. **Philanthropic Budget**: A plan for supporting meaningful causes within your financial means.
4. **Financial Vision Document**: A comprehensive roadmap aligning your finances with life goals.