

Economics 410
Intermediate Theory: Price and Distribution
Fall 2020

Instructor:	Michelle Sheran-Andrews
Class Meetings:	Section 01 MWF 9:20–10:10 am https://unc.zoom.us/j/92183739896 Meeting ID: 921 8373 9896 Section 02 MWF 10:40–11:30 am https://unc.zoom.us/j/93209821928 Meeting ID: 932 0982 1928
Prerequisites:	ECON 101, and one of MATH 152, 231, STOR 112, or 113
Website:	http://sakai.unc.edu (There is one Sakai site for both sections.)
Credit Hours:	4 credits

Contact Information

- Emails with private or sensitive information (including grades) should be sent to me directly at sheran@unc.edu.
- Questions about recitations should be directed to your TA. A list of TAs and their emails will be posted on *Sakai* under *Contact Information*.
- Please post all other course-related questions on Piazza. (See page 3 of this syllabus for information on Piazza.)

Class Description

The purpose of this course is to explore the foundations of Microeconomic theory, focusing on the behaviors of consumers, producers, and the interaction of these agents in the marketplace. The organization of markets and its implications for firm behavior and market equilibrium are also examined. This course is divided into the following three topics:

- *Consumer theory*: How households make decisions in the face of scarcity and how these decisions vary in response to changes in the economic environment.
- *Firm theory*: How firms make decisions in the face of scarcity and how these decisions vary in response to changes in the economic environment.
- *The organization of markets*: How perfectly competitive, monopolistic, monopolistically competitive, and oligopolistic markets are organized and the outcomes of these markets.

The principles covered in this course are building blocks. These building blocks can and will be used in elective courses to analyze many specialized topics. This material cannot be learned passively. A major goal of this course is to teach you to "think" in a manner beyond fact recall. Active thinking and problem solving are essential. *Microeconomic theory is a tool learned best by use!*

Class Required Resources

- a. **Technology:** You are required to have a computer with a microphone and a webcam, particularly during exams which will be proctored. You also need high-speed internet access during class time (and recitation time if you are in a remote recitation).
- b. **Poll Everywhere:** We will use *Poll Everywhere* for online polling in class. For more information, visit <https://poll.unc.edu/>.
- c. **Textbook:** The recommended textbook is *Microeconomics* by David Besanko and Ronald Braeutigam. **You do NOT have to purchase the most recent version of this textbook.** If you would like to rent or purchase a different textbook, most any "Intermediate Microeconomics" textbook will have similar content, and older editions will likely be just as useful as newer additions. In addition, there are a variety of books on reserve through the library, some of which are ebooks.

Class Expectations

- a. **Regular class attendance is expected and strongly encouraged!** We will meet via Zoom at our scheduled time every Monday (except for Labor Day), Wednesday and Friday. You should prepare for class in advance by watching the assigned prerecorded videos and answering/submitting the associated Guided Video Questions. During class you are expected to actively engage in class discussions, while in breakout rooms, and through in-class polls. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to watch the Zoom recording and answer the class' poll questions by 11:59pm the same day. (More on this below.)
- b. **Regular recitation attendance is expected and strongly encouraged!** Recitations will meet every Monday (except for Labor Day) or Friday at the scheduled time. Recitations 604, 615 and 616 will meet remotely via Zoom while all other recitations will meet face-to-face. Students should prepare for recitation in advance by attempting the posted recitation problems. If you miss a recitation, it is your responsibility to submit your answers to the recitation problems to Gradescope by 11:59pm on the Monday of the relevant recitation cycle. (More on this below.)
- c. **I strongly encourage you to have your cameras on during class and remote recitations!** There are positive externalities in doing so that benefit us all! I strive to create an inclusive environment in which all students feel comfortable participating and asking questions. We're remote, but we can still be an active community of learners!
- d. **As this is a 4-credit class, you should plan to dedicate between 12 and 16 hours per week on it including class/recitation time.** It is highly unlikely that studying "a lot" the week before the exam will make up for not studying enough in the weeks preceding the exam. Most ECON410 students realize that this just doesn't work in economics or with the way in which I teach and test. Please read and consider adopting the study tips presented below on page 9.
- e. **Seek help immediately if you are doing all the required work and are still having difficulty with the material!** You have an instructional team of one instructor, 6 graduate teaching assistants (TAs), and 9 undergraduate learning assistants (ULAs) all ready to help you! Please below for how to get help.

Class Assistance

I want you to succeed in ECON 410! There are lots of ways for you to get help throughout the semester. Please take advantage of these opportunities.

- a. **Recitations Sessions:** You will have the opportunity each week to ask questions and get assistance during recitations.
- b. **Instructor's Office Hours:** I will hold office hours each week via Zoom. My hours will be posted on *Sakai* under *Contact Information*.
- c. **ULA Coaching Sessions:** Undergraduate Learning Assistants (ULAs) are available for one-on-one or small group "coaching" appointments. Examples of how coaching sessions can be of help to you include, 1) Getting the math help you need to set you up for success in the class, 2) Learning how to study effectively for this class, 3) Getting help with the course material, 4) Discussing the learning objectives on the help sheets, 5) Having someone help you set up weekly study goals and hold you accountable to them. The schedule for coaching sessions will be posted on *Sakai* under *Contact Information*.
- d. **Piazza:** We will sign you up for our course site on Piazza, a free Q&A platform. The link is piazza.com/unc/fall2020/econ410. Please post all course-related questions there, except questions about personal concerns or individual grades. You may post questions about the *content* covered on an assignment, but do not post direct answers or solutions to graded assignments. You can expect a response to your post from someone on the instructional team within 24 hours from Monday-Friday and within 48 hours on weekends. You are also encouraged to answer each other's questions!
- e. **EconAid Center:** The EconAid Center offers free peer tutoring via Zoom here: <https://unc.zoom.us/j/105650016>. It will be open from 9am to 8pm every weekday. You can find the schedule for course-specific help on our course Sakai site or the full EconAid schedule is available online [here](#).
- f. **The Learning Center:** The UNC Learning Center is a great resource both for students who are struggling in their courses and for those who want to be proactive and develop sound study practices to prevent falling behind. They offer individual consultations, peer tutoring, academic coaching, test prep programming, study skills workshops, and peer study groups. If you think you might benefit from their services, please visit them in SASB North or visit their website to set up an appointment: <http://learningcenter.unc.edu/>

Grades

You can earn up to 100 points throughout the semester from the 6 course components explained below. Your course grade will be calculated as the sum of your earned points, and letter grades will be assigned based on the following schedule.

A	93 and above
A-	90 – 92
B+	87 – 89
B	83 – 86
B-	80 – 82
C+	77 – 79
C	73 – 76
C-	70 – 72
D+	67 – 70
D	60 – 66
F	< 60

a. Guided Video Questions: max 5 points

There will be 32 Guided Video Question (GVQ) sets. Each will be graded on a pass/fail basis. To pass your answers must be in your own words, reflect a good faith effort, and be submitted to Gradescope by 11:59pm the night before the relevant class. The GVQs must be done individually. You may not work with others on this course component.

Your GVQ score will be calculated based on the proportion of GVQs you pass, up to 29. Note this means I will automatically drop 3 when calculating your score as follows:

$$GVQ = \min \left(\left(\frac{\# \text{ passed}}{29} \right) * 5, 5 \right)$$

b. Recitations: max 5 points

There will be 13 total recitations during which you will work on short answer questions with your classmates and a TA. These questions are designed to give you a deeper understanding of course concepts and practice with exam-type questions. Each recitation will be graded on a pass/fail basis. “Passing” depends on whether you are working synchronously or asynchronously.

Synchronously: To pass, you must attend (either F2F or via Zoom) and participate in the recitation. Specific requirements for participation will be determined and communicated by your TA.

Asynchronously: To pass, your answers must be your own, reflect a good faith effort, and be submitted to Gradescope by 11:59pm on the Monday of the relevant recitation cycle.

Your Recitation score will be calculated based on the proportion you pass, up to 12. Note this means I will automatically drop 1 when calculating your score as follows:

$$Recitation = \min \left(\left(\frac{\# \text{ passed}}{12} \right) * 5, 5 \right)$$

c. Class Participation: max 10 points

There will be 37 total classes during which we will learn by solving and discussing poll questions. Each class will be graded on a pass/fail basis. “Passing” depends on whether you are working synchronously or asynchronously.

Synchronously: To pass, you must attend (via Zoom) at least 40 minutes of the 50-minute class and answer the polls via Poll Everywhere. Polls will be graded based on completion.

Asynchronously: To pass, you must watch the class Zoom recording and answer the polls via Poll Everywhere. You must get at least 90% of a class’ polls correct to pass.

Your class participation score will be calculated based on the proportion you pass, up to 34. Note this means I will automatically drop 3 when I calculate your score as follows:

$$\text{Class Participation} = \min \left(\left(\frac{\# \text{ passed}}{34} \right) * 10, 10 \right)$$

d. Problem Sets: max 10 points

There will be 10 problem sets, each consisting of 10 multiple choice questions. Each set will be graded on a pass/fail basis. To pass you must submit your answers to Sakai by 11:59pm on the assigned Wednesday and get at least 8 out of 10 questions correct. Your score will be calculated based on the proportion you pass, up to 9. Note this means I will automatically drop 1 when calculating your score as follows:

$$\text{Problem Sets} = \min \left(\left(\frac{\# \text{ passed}}{9} \right) * 10, 10 \right)$$

You may work with other students on these problem sets but sharing answers via group me or other group chat, using previous homework, and looking up answers online are all violations of the Honor Code. Additionally, you are expected to attempt each problem at least once before seeking help.

e. Midterms: max 40 points

There will be 3 midterms, each worth 20 points and consisting of 5 short answer questions. Your midterm score will be the sum of your two highest midterms. That is, I will automatically drop your lowest midterm. You must take each midterm with the section in which you are registered at the official time of that section. You will be proctored during a midterm; you must have a camera on during an exam.

f. Final Exam: max 30 points

The cumulative final exam will be worth 30 points and consist of 6 short answer questions, worth 3 points each, and 12 multiple choice questions, worth 1 point each. You must take the final exam with the section in which you are registered at the official time assigned by the Registrar. You will be proctored during the final; you must have a camera on during the final.

Class Policies

- a. **Late and/or Makeup Policy:** All due dates and times are firm! It is your responsibility to allow enough time for submission. Missing a deadline because you have technical problems in the last few minutes before the cut off is missing an assignment. No extensions or makeups will be given for any reason. I completely understand and empathize with the fact that sometimes health and/or personal/family emergencies take priority. It is for that reason that I have built in at least one drop for each component of the class (except the final exam). Making exceptions to this policy for students on an ad hoc basis, especially with over 400 students, leads to inequities in how students are assessed, and this is something I work hard to avoid. I know of no better way to treat students fairly and equally than by applying the same standards and policies to all. With that being said, in the case of a severe and ongoing issue (i.e. where you must miss a week or more of classes), please contact the [Office of the Dean of Students](#) and then communicate with me as soon as possible so that a plan forward may be discussed.
- b. **Makeup Exam Policy:** I do not offer makeup midterms and instead drop the lowest exam for every student. If you would like to take an exam late not for credit but for practice and to receive grader feedback, you are welcome to do so; please contact me directly. If you miss an exam and either have a University Approved Absence (<https://odos.unc.edu/student-support/class-absences/request-university-approved-absences>) or documentation of a significant health and/or personal/family emergency, then you can choose to either use your one exam drop on that missed exam or have that exam's weight transferred to the final exam. (The final exam would then be worth 50 points.) Please email me directly (sheran@unc.edu) should you wish to pursue this reweighting option.
- c. **Regrade Requests:** All regrade requests must be made through *Gradescope* within 1 week of the date the assignment's grade is posted. There will be no exceptions to this rule except in extraordinary circumstances. Regrade requests will be addressed by the TA who graded the assignment. If you are unsatisfied with how your regrade request is resolved, please then contact me directly either via email or by appointment.
- d. **Accessibility Resources & Service (ARS):** The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill facilitates the implementation of reasonable accommodations, including resources and services, for students with disabilities, chronic medical conditions, a temporary disability or pregnancy complications resulting in difficulties with accessing learning opportunities. All accommodations are coordinated through the Accessibility Resources and Service Office. In the first instance please visit their website <http://accessibility.unc.edu>, Tel: 919-962-8300 or Email: accessibility@unc.edu.
- a. **Extra Credit:** I do not offer extra credit. This is because if everyone knows about it, it's not really extra credit. It's just another assignment. If some people don't know about it (for instance, if a specific student asks for extra credit at the end of the semester), then I'm treating my students differently, which I make every attempt to avoid.

Course Schedule

I reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus, including assignment due dates and exam dates. These changes will be announced as early as possible.

Class Date	Class Lesson	Recitation # (Topic)
Monday, August 10	Introduction and Math review	
Wednesday, August 12	Consumer Theory: Budget constraints	
Friday, August 14	Consumer Theory: Budget constraints	1 (Budget Constraint)
Monday, August 17	Consumer Theory: Preferences	1 (Budget Constraint)
Wednesday, August 19	Consumer Theory: Preferences	
Friday, August 21	Consumer Theory: Preferences	2 (Preferences)
Monday, August 24	Consumer Theory: Preferences	2 (Preferences)
Wednesday, August 26	Consumer Theory: Constrained Utility Maximization	
Friday, August 28	Consumer Theory: Constrained Utility Maximization	3 (Corner Solutions)
Monday, August 31	Consumer Theory: Constrained Utility Maximization	3 (Corner Solutions)
Wednesday, September 2	Consumer Theory: Demand	
Friday, September 4	Consumer Theory: Demand	
Monday, September 7	LABOR DAY- no class	
Wednesday, September 9	Midterm 1	
Friday, September 11	Consumer Theory: Demand	4 (Demand)
Monday, September 14	Consumer Theory: Elasticity	4 (Demand)
Wednesday, September 16	Consumer Theory: Income and Substitution Effects	
Friday, September 18	Consumer Theory: Income and Substitution Effects	5 (IE/SE)
Monday, September 21	Consumer Theory: Income and Substitution Effects	5 (IE/SE)
Wednesday, September 23	Consumer Theory: Uncertainty	
Friday, September 25	Consumer Theory: Uncertainty	6 (Uncertainty)
Monday, September 28	Consumer Theory: Extensions	6 (Uncertainty)
Wednesday, September 30	Firm Theory: Production	
Friday, October 2	Firm Theory: Production	7 (Production)
Monday, October 5	Firm Theory: Production	7 (Production)
Wednesday, October 7	Midterm 2	
Friday, October 9	Firm Theory: Cost Minimization	8 (Cost Minimization)
Monday, October 12	Firm Theory: Input Demand	8 (Cost Minimization)
Wednesday, October 14	Firm Theory: Input Demand	
Friday, October 16	Firm Theory: Long Run Cost	9 (LRTC)
Monday, October 19	Firm Theory: Long Run Cost	9 (LRTC)
Wednesday, October 21	The Organization of Markets: Perfect Competition	
Friday, October 23	The Organization of Markets: Perfect Competition	10 (Perfect Comp)
Monday, October 26	The Organization of Markets: Perfect Competition	10 (Perfect Comp)
Wednesday, October 28	The Organization of Markets: Monopoly	
Friday, October 30	The Organization of Markets: Monopoly	11 (Monopoly)
Monday, November 2	The Organization of Markets: Monopoly	11 (Monopoly)

Wednesday, November 4

Midterm 3

Friday, November 6	The Organization of Markets: Price Discrimination	12 (Monopoly)
Monday, November 9	The Organization of Markets: Game Theory	12 (Monopoly)
Wednesday, November 11	The Organization of Markets: Oligopoly	
Friday, November 13	The Organization of Markets: Oligopoly	13 (Oligopoly)
Monday, November 16	Catch up and Review	13 (Oligopoly)

Study Tips

MSA's Top Study Tips

How do you succeed in ECON 410? Here's my best advice: *Strive to understand the homework and practice problems inside and out.*

1. Work through the practice problem(s) mapped to each question on a problem set *before* attempting the question.
2. Make a serious effort to complete each problem independently before conferring with others.
3. Confer with others and compare your solutions, understand differences, and come to a consensus.
4. Write out thorough and detailed solutions to the multiple-choice questions on problem sets, even though these solutions will not be collected or graded.
5. Actively compare your solutions with the answer key and identify and understand any differences and fill in any missing holes.
6. Actively compare problem set and practice problem(s), seek to rectify any contradictions between problems, and anticipate variations in problems.
7. Rework problems until you can teach them to someone else, and then do just that (even if "someone else" is a plant or invisible friend).

Want more advice? Here you go!

- Learning happens gradually. For example, spending 20 hours over 4 weeks is much more beneficial than 20 hours in a single week. Schedule study time each week that is designated for this class.
- There can be a big difference between understanding something in your head and communicating it in words. A highly effective way to assess your understanding of the material is to pretend you are teaching it to someone else!
- Don't just know *what* to do when solving a problem; understand *why*.
- Practice drawing graphs yourself until you can draw them without looking at your notes or book. Be able to explain what you are drawing.
- Skim the relevant reading assignment *before* class so you will be familiar with the general idea of what is coming. After class, go back and selectively read the chapter for deeper understanding. Take notes from your textbook within your class notes.
- Get adequate sleep the night before the exam. Your brain works best when well rested.