

**Economics 410**  
***Intermediate Theory: Price and Distribution***  
**Spring 2021**

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<b>Instructor:</b>	Dr. Michelle Sheran-Andrews
<b>Class Meetings:</b>	<b>Section 01</b> MWF 9:05–9:55 am <b>Section 02</b> MWF 10:10–11:00 am Zoom links for class meetings are posted on Sakai under <i>Contact Information</i> .
<b>Prerequisites:</b>	ECON 101 and one of MATH 152, 231, STOR 112, or 113
<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://sakai.unc.edu">http://sakai.unc.edu</a> (There is one Sakai site for both sections.)
<b>Credit Hours:</b>	4 credits

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**Emails**

- Emails with private or sensitive information (including grades) should be sent to me directly at [sheran@unc.edu](mailto:sheran@unc.edu).
- Questions about recitations should be directed to your TA.
- Questions about course material should be directed to either your House ULA (see page 3) or TA. If you do not get a satisfactory response within 2 days, please then email me directly at [sheran@unc.edu](mailto:sheran@unc.edu).

**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 and recitation time. We will use Zoom for class and recitations. Please download the most recent version. To do so, sign into the Zoom desktop client. Click your profile picture, then click Check for Updates. If there is a newer version, Zoom will download and install it.
- 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, Wednesday, and Friday except for scheduled breaks. (See the schedule on pages 8-9.) 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 next day. (More on this below.)
- b. **Regular recitation attendance is expected and strongly encouraged!** Recitations will meet via Zoom every Monday or Friday except for scheduled breaks. (See the schedule on pages 8-9.) Students should prepare for recitation in advance by attempting the posted recitation problems. Answers to the recitation problems must be submitted 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 are 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, 7 graduate teaching assistants (TAs), and 12 undergraduate learning assistants (ULAs) all ready to help you! See below for how to get help.

## Class Assistance

I want you to succeed in ECON 410! There are lots of **remote** ways for you to get help throughout the semester. Please take advantage of these opportunities. All relevant Zoom links are posted on Sakai under *Contact Information*.

- a. **Instructor Office Hours:** I love working with students during office hours! I encourage you to drop-in to my office hours with any questions. I don't schedule specific appointments during office hours but can meet with you privately in a breakout room upon request. Days and times TBD.
- b. **TA Office Hours:** The TAs will hold weekly office hours in addition to being available for assistance during recitations. Days and times TBD.
- c. **ULA Study Sessions:** You will be assigned to one of twelve "Houses" based on your recitation. Each house will be captained by a ULA, who will host a weekly Study Session. Days and times TBD by each house. The purpose of Study Sessions is to build a community of learners and provide an opportunity for you to meet and collaborate as well as ask your ULA questions.
- d. **ULA Help Sessions:** Help Sessions will be offered every Monday and Tuesday from 7-9pm and staffed with three ULAs. Drop in with questions regarding any course material or assignments. You can also use these help sessions to form small study groups via breakout rooms; just ask a ULA to set this up! The ULAs are also well-qualified to discuss effective study strategies for this class and can even work with you on setting up weekly study goals and holding you accountable to them.
- e. **EconAid Center:** The Department of Economics offers free peer tutoring through the EconAid Center. You can find the schedule [here](#).
- f. **The Learning Center:** The UNC Learning Center also offers free peer tutoring. Please visit their website to set up an appointment: <http://learningcenter.unc.edu/>

**Have a question or need help with a problem set?** Specific questions on graded assignments will only be answered if you can demonstrate that you have already attempted the problem. If you are unsure of how to start or interpret a problem, refer to the recommended practice problems; these problems will help you get started.

## 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.

<b>A</b>	93 and above
<b>A-</b>	90 – 92
<b>B+</b>	87 – 89
<b>B</b>	83 – 86
<b>B-</b>	80 – 82
<b>C+</b>	77 – 79
<b>C</b>	73 – 76
<b>C-</b>	70 – 72
<b>D+</b>	67 – 70
<b>D</b>	60 – 66
<b>F</b>	< 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 points will be calculated based on the proportion of GVQs you pass, up to 28. Note this means I will automatically drop 4 when calculating your points as follows:

$$GVQ\ Points = \min \left( \left( \frac{\# \text{ passed}}{28} \right) * 5, 5 \right)$$

### b. Recitations: max 5 points

There will be 12 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. To pass, your answers must reflect a good faith effort and be submitted to Gradescope by 11:59pm on the Monday of the relevant recitation cycle.

Your Recitation points will be calculated based on the proportion you pass, up to 11. Note this means I will automatically drop one recitation when calculating your points as follows:

$$Recitation\ Points = \min \left( \left( \frac{\# \text{ passed}}{11} \right) * 5, 5 \right)$$

### c. Class Participation: max 5 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 by 11:59pm the next day. You must get all the class' polls correct to pass.

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

$$\text{Class Participation Points} = \min \left( \left( \frac{\# \text{ passed}}{34} \right) * 5, 5 \right)$$

**d. Problem Sets: max 15 points**

There will be 11 problem sets, each consisting of 10 multiple choice questions worth 1 point each. You must submit your answers to Sakai by 11:59pm on the assigned Wednesday. I will drop your lowest problem set before calculating your average, and points will be calculated as follows.

$$\text{Problem Set Points} = 1.5 * \text{average score}$$

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. Per UNC rules, you can only take the final exam at an alternative time if you have an official exam excuse. If you email me the official excuse **before the last day of classes**, you can take the final exam with the other section. Each section will receive a different final exam, and you will be eligible only for the curve (if there is one) applied to the section with which you took the final exam. If you miss the final exam and do not have an excuse from the Dean, you will receive a score of 0 on your final.

## Class Policies

- a. **Late and/or Makeup Policy:** All due dates are firm, and no extensions or makeups will be given. I completely understand and empathize with the fact that sometimes health and/or personal/family emergencies take priority. Furthermore, sometimes your internet crashes, your computer gets a virus, you get the homework done early but then forget to submit it... It is for all these reasons and more that I have built in at least one drop for each component of the class (except the final exam). These drops are meant to cover these “life events,” and so I do not additionally accept late assignments or provide makeups. Making exceptions to this policy for students on a case-by-case 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, I do make exceptions **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 we can work out a plan for you together.
- 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](mailto: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. Regrade requests for the final exam are due within 24 hours of the grade being 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. **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.

- e. **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 barriers to fully accessing University courses, programs and activities. Accommodations are determined through the Office of Accessibility Resources and Service (ARS) for individuals with documented qualifying disabilities in accordance with applicable state and federal laws. See the ARS Website for contact information: <https://ars.unc.edu> or email [ars@unc.edu](mailto:ars@unc.edu).

Students registered through ARS should send me an email with their accommodations through the ARS portal. I will contact those who receive extended time on exams before the first exam to coordinate. For all other accommodations of which I should be aware, please email me at [sheran@unc.edu](mailto:sheran@unc.edu) to discuss!

- f. **Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS):** CAPS is strongly committed to addressing the mental health needs of a diverse student body through timely access to consultation and connection to clinically appropriate services, whether for short or long-term needs. Go to their website: <https://caps.unc.edu/> or visit their facilities on the third floor of the Campus Health Services building for a walk-in evaluation to learn more.
- g. **Title IX Resources:** Any student who is impacted by discrimination, harassment, interpersonal (relationship) violence, sexual violence, sexual exploitation, or stalking is encouraged to seek resources on campus or in the community. Please contact the Director of Title IX Compliance (Adrienne Allison – [Adrienne.allison@unc.edu](mailto:Adrienne.allison@unc.edu)), Report and Response Coordinators in the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office ([reportandresponse@unc.edu](mailto:reportandresponse@unc.edu)), Counseling and Psychological Services (confidential), or the Gender Violence Services Coordinators ([gvsc@unc.edu](mailto:gvsc@unc.edu); confidential) to discuss your specific needs. Additional resources are available at [safe.unc.edu](http://safe.unc.edu).

## 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.

<b>DATE</b>	<b>Lesson</b>	<b>Recitations</b>
Wednesday, January 20	Introduction	
Friday, January 22	Math Review	1 (Math Review)
Monday, January 25	Consumer Theory: Budget constraints	1 (Math Review)
Wednesday, January 27	Consumer Theory: Budget constraints	
Friday, January 29	Consumer Theory: Preferences and Utility	2 (Budget Constraint)
Monday, February 1	Consumer Theory: Preferences and Utility	2 (Budget Constraint)
Wednesday, February 3	Consumer Theory: Preferences and Utility	
Friday, February 5	Consumer Theory: Constrained Utility Maximization	3 (Preferences)
Monday, February 8	Consumer Theory: Constrained Utility Maximization	3 (Preferences)
Wednesday, February 10	Consumer Theory: Constrained Utility Maximization	
Friday, February 12	Consumer Theory: Demand	<b>No recitations</b>
Monday, February 15	<b>No Class- Wellness Day</b>	<b>No recitations</b>
Wednesday, February 17	<b>No Class- Wellness Day</b>	
Friday, February 19	Consumer Theory: Demand	4 (Corners)
Monday, February 22	Consumer Theory: Elasticity	4 (Corners)
Wednesday, February 24	<b>Midterm 1</b>	
Friday, February 26	Consumer Theory: Income and Substitution Effects	5 (Demand)
Monday, March 1	Consumer Theory: Income and Substitution Effects	5 (Demand)
Wednesday, March 3	Consumer Theory: Income and Substitution Effects	
Friday, March 5	Consumer Theory: Uncertainty	6 (IE/SE)
Monday, March 8	Consumer Theory: Uncertainty	6 (IE/SE)
Wednesday, March 10	Consumer Theory: Extensions	
Friday, March 12	<b>No Class- Wellness Day</b>	<b>No recitations</b>
Monday, March 15	Firm Theory: Production	<b>No recitations</b>
Wednesday, March 17	Firm Theory: Production	
Friday, March 19	Firm Theory: Production	7 (Production)
Monday, March 22	Firm Theory: Cost Minimization	7 (Production)
Wednesday, March 24	<b>Midterm 2</b>	
Friday, March 26	Firm Theory: Input Demand	8 (Cost Min)
Monday, March 29	Firm Theory: Input Demand	8 (Cost Min)

Wednesday, March 31	Firm Theory: Long Run Cost	
Friday, April 2	<b>No Class- Holiday</b>	<b>No recitations</b>
Monday, April 5	<b>No Class- Wellness Day</b>	<b>No recitations</b>
Wednesday, April 7	Firm Theory: Long Run Cost	
Friday, April 9	Firm Theory: Profit Maximization	9 (LRTC)
Monday, April 12	The Organization of Markets: Perfect Competition	9 (LRTC)
Wednesday, April 14	The Organization of Markets: Perfect Competition	
Friday, April 16	The Organization of Markets: Monopoly	10 (PC)
Monday, April 19	The Organization of Markets: Monopoly	10 (PC)
Wednesday, April 21	<b>Midterm 3</b>	
Friday, April 23	The Organization of Markets: Monopoly	11 (Monopoly)
Monday, April 26	The Organization of Markets: Price Discrimination	11 (Monopoly)
Wednesday, April 28	The Organization of Markets: Game Theory	
Friday, April 30	The Organization of Markets: Oligopoly	12 (Oligopoly)
Monday, May 3	The Organization of Markets: Oligopoly	12 (Oligopoly)
Wednesday, May 5	Wrap up & Review	
<b>Section 02 Final Exam Friday, May 7 at 8:00am</b>		
<b>Section 01 Final Exam Thursday, May 13 at 8:00am</b>		

## 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.