

ECON 310/MGMT 310: Intermediate Microeconomics
Fall 2021
3 Credit Hours

Course Information

Instructor: Matthew Ross
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Office Hours: TBD

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Mode: In-Person
Place and Time: Fetzer Hall Room 0109. MWF, 2:30 - 3:20

Final Exam: See University Schedule

Course Description

Analysis of the ways in which consumers and business firms interact in a market economy.

Course Materials

There is no required textbook for this class but there are several available that will contain useful supplementary information and practice problems. Microeconomics by Robert Pindyck and Daniel Rubinfeld is a good option but pretty much any undergraduate level textbook with "Intermediate Microeconomics" in the title will be a good resource. Please do not feel the need to purchase a new textbook for this class.

I will make versions of my own notes available to you but please note that they may not be full or complete to encourage active listening during class.

Course Goals

1. The main take away that I want you to have from this course is not necessarily the knowledge of a specific model or "economic facts" but the ability to use economic models and the economist's way of thinking to understand and think critically about a wide range of issues and problems present in today's world.
2. Along the lines of goal #1, I want this course to help you to build critical thinking skills, especially the ability to see a new problem and use economic intuition and your economics knowledge to analyze and think of a solution to that problem.
3. Understand the way that microeconomists think and explain human behavior and evaluate its strengths and shortcomings.

Learning Objectives

To achieve these course goals we will need to learn the basic mathematical tools and reasoning economists use to evaluate real world situations, some of these include:

1. Vocabulary: Economists use a unique set of vocabulary that can be confusing at first, especially when we take a word and redefine it from its typical English meaning.
2. Assumptions: What economists assume about behavior and why they assume those things.
3. The ability to correctly interpret and understand the results and implications of each model we study.
4. The ability to analyze a model and pinpoint the appropriate contexts and real world situations the model can be applied to.
5. The ability to analyze a model and pinpoint contexts and real life situations the model SHOULD NOT be applied to and understand the implications when a real world problem is not analyzed with an appropriate model.

Class Time

Each class will consist of lectures and participation activities. To be prepared for class you should come having recently read over lecture notes or your own notes from the previous lecture and be ready to take off from where we last left off. To incentivize this we will have a quick PollEverywhere quiz at the beginning of each class that counts as your participation grade. During class you are expected to pay attention and participate during activities and answer questions from time to time. After class I encourage you to review the topics of the day and get a general view of any of the specifics we covered during class. Class works better when everyone is engaged and actively thinking about the material.

In order to be successful in this class I would expect that you spend on average 3-6 hours per week outside of class time on the material. This of course will vary person to person and week to week.

Homework

There will be roughly 10 homework assignments you must complete in this class. It is *roughly* 10 because I may decide to split up an assignment into two or concatenate two into one. I will post assignments to Sakai 1-2 weeks before they are due. You are highly encouraged to work with other students on the assignments, but everyone must turn in his or her own version of the homework. Your assignment must clearly reflect your own work and cannot contain verbatim passages from your classmates' assignments. Depending on how many assignments we end up having I will drop 1-2 of your lowest homework scores.

The homework for this class is very important, you cannot learn economics by solely reading or listening to a lecture. You should use the homework as a chance to engage with the material and deepen your understanding. To make the homework less busywork and more of a learning opportunity, if you get a higher grade on the final than your overall homework grade I will raise the homework grade to the level of your final grade. This is my way of saying that I don't care if you can get it right the first time, I just care that you understand it eventually.

I will provide answers to all questions about one week after the assignment is due. If you wish to appeal a grade you must submit a written statement of why you believe you were graded incorrectly/unfairly within a week of receiving your graded work. If the appeal is reasonable and within time limits, I will regrade the whole assignment. Please note that this does not guarantee a higher grade or equal grade.

Homework will be turned in on Gradescope and no late work is accepted. I do not accept late homework because the day it is due we may discuss some details of the homework in class. To give you the most amount of time possible I make it due the minute class starts.

Exams

There will be two midterm exams and one final exam. These exams will be held in person.

An unexcused absence will result in a zero grade for that exam. If you had extenuating circumstances that made it impossible for you to attend that exam and not notify me about it in advance, talk with me and we'll work it out. This will typically result in placing the weight of a midterm exam on the final exam.

If you do poorly on a midterm exam I do not want you to feel as if you cannot do well in the course. Accordingly, the midterm with the better score will count for 30% of the final grade and the worse will count for 10%.

If you will miss an exam due to a university-approved absence, you must provide documentation for this approval as soon as you are aware of the conflict and are able to provide the documentation. Valid reasons for missing an exam include: a documented personal illness, a serious illness or emergency within your immediate family, or an authorized university activity. Personal travel, job interviews, and club activities are not approved absences.

Re-grade policy: For simple scoring or adding-up mistakes, return the exam to me with a brief explanation. For more substantial cases where you think that you deserve credit for an answer, write one or two paragraphs explaining why you think your answer is correct, and give your exam and explanation to me within two weeks of when I return the graded exams. I will regrade your entire exam along with the answers you felt were graded incorrectly. Please note that this does not guarantee a better or even equal score to the original.

Grading

Your grade will be based on three exams, your homework assignments, and class participation. Your grade is divided as follows:

Midterm(s): 40%
Final: 40%
Homework: 10%
Participation: 10%

Grades will be curved so that final course grades have at least a B- average although I hope the average will be higher. They will be curved in such a way that no one is harmed by the curve. Accordingly, your raw score on exams may not tell you much about the actual grade. No curving will be done until all grades are in at the end of the semester. I will give a distribution of grades for each exam so you have an idea about how you're doing relative to the rest of the class.

The grade scale I use is the standard grade scale with 93%+ being an A.

For participation grades please see the next section.

Attendance Policy

Class Policy

Due to the design of this class, attendance and participation in class activities is highly important to the learning process. Attendance is not mandatory per se, but it is incentivized by a 2-3 question PollEverywhere quiz on the previous class period's content. I will drop 5 of your lowest quiz scores to permit for any illness or unforeseen circumstances. The quiz will be started promptly at the beginning of class, if you do not answer the question before it is locked you will not receive credit. Correct answers will receive full credit and wrong answers half credit.

University Policy

No right or privilege exists that permits a student to be absent from any class meetings, except for these University Approved Absences:

- Authorized University activities
- Disability/religious observance/pregnancy, as required by law and approved by Accessibility Resources and Service and/or the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office (EOC)
- Significant health condition and/or personal/family emergency as approved by the Office of the Dean of Students, Gender Violence Service Coordinators, and/or the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office (EOC).

If you have a University Approved Absence we will work together to make up what you missed during class. If you have a conflict with one of the exam dates due to a University Approved Absence please let me know with at least three weeks notice.

Mask Policy

This semester, while we are in the midst of a global pandemic, all enrolled students are required to wear a mask covering your mouth and nose at all times in our classroom. This requirement is to protect our educational community — your classmates and me – as we learn together. If you choose not to wear a mask, or wear it improperly, I will ask you to leave immediately, and I will submit a report to the Office of Student Conduct. At that point you will be disenrolled from this course for the protection of our educational community. Students who have an authorized accommodation from Accessibility Resources and Service have an exception. For additional information, see Carolina Together.

Technology Usage

No laptops or cellphones should be opened or used during class time except for the PollEverywhere quiz at the beginning of class. The exception I'll make is if you use a tablet device to take hand-written notes but these must be flat on the table instead of propped up at an angle. You will not need computers for any in class activities.

Accessibility Resources

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.

Additional Student Resources

- 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>.

- The Writing Center is located in the Student and Academic Services Building and offers personalized writing consultations as well as a variety of other resources. This could be a wonderful resource to help with your writing assignments in this course (and any assignments in your other courses). You do not need a complete draft of your assignment to visit; they can help you at any stage! You can chat with someone in the writing center or set up an appointment on their website: <http://writingcenter.unc.edu>.

Counseling and Psychological Services

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.

Title IX

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), Report and Response Coordinators in the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office (reportandresponse@unc.edu), Counseling and Psychological Services (confidential), or the Gender Violence Services Coordinators (gvsc@unc.edu; confidential) to discuss your specific needs. Additional resources are available at safe.unc.edu.

Honor Code

All students are expected to follow the guidelines of the UNC honor code. In particular, students are expected to refrain from “lying, cheating, or stealing” in the academic context. If you are unsure about which actions violate that honor code, please see me or consult honor.unc.edu. Students are bound by the Honor Code in taking exams and in written work. The Honor Code of the University is in effect at all times, and the submission of work signifies understanding and acceptance of those requirements. Plagiarism will not be tolerated.

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>.

Schedule

I am providing you with a rough schedule of topics for the semester. This will be the general direction for the course but timing may be subject to change.

1. Preferences
2. Utility
3. Budget Constraints
4. Constrained Utility Maximization

5. Demand
6. Income and Substitution Effects
7. Uncertainty
8. Production
9. Cost and Cost Minimization
10. Perfect Competition
11. Monopoly
12. Oligopoly
13. Time Permitting:
 - (a) Game Theory
 - (b) Externalities and Public Goods

Disclaimer

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