

Sample Syllabus – EC 201 – Introduction to Microeconomics
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Course Description:

Economics is the study of constrained decision-making, or, how individuals, organizations, governments, and societies allocate scarce resources and respond to incentives. Microeconomics is the study of decisions made by relatively “small” actors: individuals, firms, and local governments. This course will provide you with an overview of important concepts in microeconomics and will build a foundation for studying issues in a variety of topic areas, including labor, trade, industrial organization, environmental policy, international development, and others. Along the way, we will apply microeconomic ideas to important national and international policy questions, including climate change, intellectual property protection, and arms control. We will use the tools we develop to study social issues, such as gender and racial discrimination in employment. We will also apply our methods to the phenomena of human behavior more generally, touching on psychology, heuristic choices, signaling and screening.

We begin by developing a very simple model of choices based on the idea of suppliers and consumers interacting in a market for a good. We use this model to explore the impact of government policy on outcomes in real-world markets.

We then explore the drivers of consumer and producer decision-making and explore the different types of competition that exist in different markets. We’ll discuss game theory, the market for labor, and imperfect information before concluding with a deep dive on a topic chosen by students.

About this Syllabus:

This syllabus is the governing document for the course: the policies contained herein will be strictly enforced. Reading this syllabus will likely improve your performance. I reserve the right to update this syllabus as I see fit throughout the term.

Course Organization:

This course integrates lectures, textbook readings, discussion sections, and homework assignments to deliver material. Success in this course relies on your ability to *synthesize* information, examples, and problems across lecture, homework, and the textbook. *Material from all sources will be used to construct the exams.*

In lecture, we will explore major concepts, discuss examples from the world around us, and work through simple problems. The textbook dives into more detail, offers additional thought-provoking ideas, and works through several more complicated example problems. Weekly online homework assignments are due every Thursday at 11:45 PM.

Exams are conducted in-person using the Canvas Quizzes tool. The midterm is on Wednesday of Week 6, and the final exam is held during the University’s scheduled examination period.

Prerequisites:

Though there are no formal prerequisites for this course, we will be working extensively with graphs and will learn several mathematical formulas. *I highly recommend students complete Math 111 before taking this course.*

Course Materials:

We will use the book *Principles of Microeconomics, 9th Edition* by N. Gregory Mankiw, along with the MindTap e-learning website. The book, along with access codes for MindTap, is available at the Duck Store.

Throughout the lectures, we will be using the i>clicker2 classroom-response system. This will allow you to respond to my questions in real time, and it will enable us to do some interactive classroom demonstrations and activities. The purchase and use of the i>clicker2 is required for the course, but to make it even more worth your while, you will receive course credit for lectures you attend. It is your responsibility to keep track of your i>clicker2 and bring it to class.

If you don't have an i>clicker2 remote, purchase one before the second lecture and have it with you.

Office Hours:

I have scheduled office hours on Mondays and Wednesdays, from 2 PM to 3 PM, in 535 PLC. This time is intended for students to ask me questions about the material; I will not provide solutions to specific homework problems (though I will cover the concepts).

If that time does not work for you, I am happy to schedule appointments through e-mail.

Each TA has weekly office hours as well – *students may attend any office hours that are convenient.*

E-mail:

Students are encouraged to contact me or their TA with questions about the course material but should not expect an immediate response. I respond to e-mail twice per day, at around 9 AM and around 5 PM. In particular, the TAs and I aim to respond to all e-mails within two business days. Additionally, we will not provide solutions to specific homework questions before that homework is due (though we will provide help understanding the concepts behind the questions).

Lectures:

I present lectures using PowerPoint slides. These slides will be available in full via Canvas. Please don't distribute the slides.

Homework:

Homework will be assigned weekly via MindTap. The due dates are indicated in the course outline at the end of this syllabus. Each homework will be due at 11:45 PM Pacific Time on Thursdays. *No late homework will be accepted.* The only exception to

this rule is an event affecting MindTap access that impacts a significant portion of the class.

Each homework will comprise of several sections, which will be added together to create your grade for the problem set. Most questions will give you three attempts (with slightly different variations). For such problems, we will take the highest score you achieve.

While eight problem sets will be assigned, *the lowest two set scores will be dropped before determining your final grade.* This means two entire weeks of homework will be dropped.

These two drops are a *scarce resource* and it is your responsibility to allocate them responsibly. I do not grant additional drops, nor are there any opportunities to make-up homework points for any reason. They are designed to be used in cases of illness, technical issues, or other urgent matters that may arise during the term.

I encourage you to work with each other to complete the homework assignments. The use of outside resources that give specific answers to specific homework problems is prohibited. Any use of such resources is therefore Academic Misconduct as defined in the Student Conduct Code.

In-class activities and participation:

Several lectures will feature in-class activities using the i>clicker2 platform. Participation will be recorded and will be part of your course grade. In an analogous fashion to the homework, three participation scores will be dropped. You are responsible for the functioning of your i>clicker2 device, except in cases where the base can be shown to have malfunctioned (i.e. if no responses from students are recorded).

Exams:

This course will have two exams. The first is an 80 minute midterm, held on the Wednesday of Week 6, that will cover the first 4 weeks of material. The second will be a comprehensive two-hour final held during the University's assigned examination period.

Tests will be held in the classroom, using the Canvas Quizzes tool (in other words, you must bring a device which can access Canvas to the exam). Tests are "open notes." *You may not discuss the exam with other students once the examination period has begun.* See "academic honesty" below. To help you stay honest, exam questions are randomized: each student will receive a slightly different exam.

One week before each test, I will post a study guide and a practice exam with solutions on Canvas. *The best way to prepare for my exams is with the practice exam and study guide.*

Exam scores may be curved at my sole discretion in two ways: first, I may apply a uniform point increase depending on the top performances in the course, and second, I may reduce the penalty for each wrong answer (so, for example, getting a question wrong loses you 1.5 points instead of 2 points). Exam curves will never result in a student obtaining a lower "curved" score than the "raw" score calculated by taking the percentage of questions answered correctly.

Make-Up Exams:

If the midterm exam is missed, the student may submit a written petition explaining the circumstances surrounding the absence. If the situation is exceptional, the petition may be approved, in which case the weight of the midterm will be placed on the final. If the petition is denied, the midterm will be given a grade of zero. I alone will determine the definition of “exceptional.” If no explanation is offered, the student will receive a grade of 0 on the midterm.

There will be a make-up final exam offered to students with a documented medical excuse.

No early exams or alternative exam times will be offered, except in cases of University-sponsored activities.

Students who miss the final exam for any other reason will receive a zero.

Grading:

Grades will be determined as follows: 5% in-class participation, 30% homework, 25% midterm and 40% final. Your scores will be combined according to those percentages to create a final course score out of 100 points, which will then be assigned a letter grade according to the table at the end of this syllabus. Students who demonstrate significant improvement between the midterm and the final may have their grades adjusted to reflect that improvement at my discretion. *The overall course grade will not be curved.*

If you are concerned about your grade in my course, please contact me as soon as possible.

Bonus Points:

You may complete optional written assignments to earn additional bonus points that will be added to your overall course grade. To earn a point, you must submit a summary of a recent news article that you can make relevant to the class via the Canvas assignment “Bonus Article Summaries.” The summary must be original, at least 400 words, and include your thoughts on the article and its relevance to the course. Up to one point per assignment will be awarded at the discretion of the head grader, under my supervision. Up to a maximum of three points may be earned by submitting three assignments. In other words, if a student with an 88 in the course has completed three bonus assignments, they will receive a 91 in the course. *Submissions will be accepted until 11:45 PM on Tuesday of Week 9.*

Additionally, students who attend office hours, ask a relevant question, and mention this section of the syllabus, will receive one half of a bonus point on their overall course grade. This can be done twice: once by attending my office hours, and once by attending a TA’s office hours, for a total of one full bonus point. *This can be done until the end of Week 10.* These points will be entered under the “Professor Bonus Opportunity” and “TA Bonus Opportunity” assignments on Canvas. Note that you *must ask for the bonus while you are in office hours* – if you contact the teaching team after attending office hours, you may not receive the bonus.

There are no opportunities for bonus points after the final exam. If you are concerned about your performance, contact me or a TA *before* the exam.

Getting Help:

Many students, particularly those in their first year at the University of Oregon, find EC 201 to be challenging. The material is difficult, the pace is high, and it can be easy to fall behind and become overwhelmed. *If you are concerned about your grades, it is imperative that you contact us as soon as possible.* Your TA and I, as well as the entire faculty of the Economics Department, are invested in your success, but you must take the first step and reach out when you encounter difficulties.

In addition to office hours, there are a number of other resources available to help you master the course material. Please contact us to learn more.

If outside circumstances are impacting your ability to succeed in this course, please contact me as soon as possible. Alternatively, you may wish to contact the Office of the Dean of Students (<http://uodos.uoregon.edu/>) or an Academic Adviser (<https://advising.uoregon.edu/>).

Mental Health and Wellness:

University Health Services help students cope with difficult emotions and life stressors. If you need general resources on coping with stress or want to talk with another student who has been in the same place as you, visit the Duck Nest (located in the EMU on the ground floor) and get help from one of the specially trained Peer Wellness Advocates. Find out more at <https://health.uoregon.edu/ducknest>.

University Counseling Services (UCS) has a team of dedicated staff members to support you with your concerns, many of whom can provide identity-based support. All clinical services are free and confidential. Find out more at counseling.uoregon.edu or by calling 541-346-3227 (anytime UCS is closed, the After-Hours Support and Crisis Line is available by calling this same number)."

For International Students:

This course can offer unique challenges for international students. As such, there are some resources designed to help international students who are struggling. Please contact the International Student & Scholar Services office for more information (<https://international.uoregon.edu/iss>).

Academic Misconduct and the Student Conduct Code:

The Student Conduct Code defines Academic Misconduct in part as "unauthorized collaboration, accessing, or using of unauthorized materials, information, tools, or study aids" and "any intentional action that helps, or is intended to help, another engage in academic misconduct." For the purposes of this class, collaboration of any kind on exams is prohibited. This includes, but is not limited to, asking questions about the exam of people who have already completed the exam, and giving information about the exam to people who have not already completed the exam. *Do not talk about exams during the exam period.*

If I have reason to believe a student has engaged in Academic Misconduct, General Misconduct, Discriminatory Misconduct, or any portion of the Student Conduct Code (including, but not limited to, the situations described above), I will follow the appropriate University Policy and contact the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards. Per Section VII of the Student Conduct Code, the conduct process may result in academic sanction. The default academic sanction for misconduct in this course is to receive a score of zero on the relevant assignment or exam. I reserve the right to assess alternative sanctions.

In short: *I have absolutely no tolerance for cheating or other dishonest behavior. Don't cheat.*

Accessibility:

The University of Oregon is working to create inclusive learning environments. Please notify me if there are aspects of this course that result in disability related barriers to your participation. For more information or assistance, you are also encouraged to contact the Accessible Education Center, 164 Oregon Hall, 346-1155; website: <http://aec.uoregon.edu/>

Recommendations:

After completing this course, students often ask me for letters of recommendation for various programs of study, scholarships, employment opportunities, or for other reasons. In general, I am unable to provide strong letters of recommendation based on performances in this course alone. I recommend that if you think you might benefit from a recommendation from me in the future, you should ask questions in class, regularly attend office hours, and generally think about how you can provide me with a basis from which to communicate with others about your skills.

Acknowledgments:

This course incorporates material and feedback collected from many Principles of Economics instructors and thousands of students. Thanks are due to Thomas Holmes and Kelvin Wong, whose work was particularly influential for the first version of this course in 2015.

Copyright Notice:

The materials used in this class, including, but not limited to, lecture slides, exams, and homework assignments are protected by copyright. You are granted permission to access materials and make copies and derivative works for your personal use. You may not distribute course materials to any other person, regardless of student status, without express written permission from me.

The sharing of class materials without the approval of the instructor may be a violation of the University's Student Conduct Code (Section V.2.f.F), which could result in further disciplinary action. *This includes, among other things, uploading class materials to public websites.* Additionally, any unauthorized copying of class materials is a violation of federal law and may result in further action.

Tentative Schedule:

This schedule may change as the course progresses. The date in the “Week” column is the date of the Monday class. Look to Canvas or MindTap for updated assignments and readings.

Week	Monday	Wednesday	Mankiw Reading	HW DUE Thursday
1 9/26	ROSH HASHANAH (no class)	Introduction / Auctions	1, 2, 3	
2 10/3	Gains from Trade	Supply and Demand	4, 5	HW 1 4 parts
3 10/10	Elasticity	Government Intervention	6, 7	HW 2 3 parts
4 10/17	Surplus and Efficiency	Policies and Surplus	8, 12, 9	HW 3 2 parts
5 10/24	International Trade	Externalities	10, 11	HW 4 3 parts
6 10/31	Public Goods	MIDTERM	13	
7 11/7	Firms 1	Firms 2	14, 15	HW 5 3 parts
8 11/14	Monopoly 1	Monopoly 2	16, 17	HW 6 2 parts
9 11/21	Game Theory / Oligopoly	Labor	18, 19	HW 7 2 parts
10 11/28	Consumer Theory	Advanced Topic	21, 22	HW 8 3 parts

Final exam: Thursday, December 8, 10:15 AM

Letter Grades:

Course Points	Letter Grade	Pass / No Pass
98+	A+	P
93-97	A	P
90-92	A-	P
87-89	B+	P
83-86	B	P
80-82	B-	P
77-79	C+	P
73-76	C	P
70-72	C-	P
67-69	D+	NP
60-66	D	NP
59-	F	NP