

UNIVERSITY OF RICHMOND

ROBINS SCHOOL OF BUSINESS



ECON 101
Principles of Microeconomics, 1 unit

Spring 2024

SYLLABUS

Instructor:	Tom Zylkin
Office:	BUS 331
E-mail:	tzylkin@richmond.edu (NOTE: All class correspondence will be sent to your Richmond e-mail accounts.)
Office Hours:	Wednesdays, 9am - 10am, 2:30pm - 3:30pm, & by appt.
Recommended Textbook:	Krugman, Paul and Robin Wells, MICROECONOMICS, 5th Ed., 2017 (You are more than welcome to obtain used copies if you wish, including those of older editions.)
Achieve (<i>required</i>):	https://achieve.macmillanlearning.com/start

Course Description: Economics is the study of how human beings make choices under constraint, how these choices shape the society we live in, and how and when policies and other interventions can be used to improve it. It also includes the study of global and regional inter-connectivities and where important aggregates such as a society's overall standard of living and its level of inequality come from. Economics is thus a rich, highly relevant subject that touches all of us in different ways. Where should one start?

For most college students just beginning their Economics journeys, a Principles of Microeconomics class such as this one is the logical first step. Microeconomics is the close study of the economic behavior of individual people and thus serves as the foundation for all other branches of Economics. However, in this particular Microeconomics class, we will approach many of the standard topics one would typically encounter in an introductory Microeconomics class using *globalization* as an organizing theme. That is, we will try to relate much of what we learn to the ever-increasing ease in which goods, people, investment, communications, technology, and culture are able to travel from one part of the World to another, a process that I hope already holds at least some interest to many of you.

By drawing on examples related to trade, migration, international cooperation, and other factors related to globalization, this class will teach you:

- how everything we do in our lives, from the everyday decisions to the long term ones, requires economic thinking using Opportunity Cost;
- how cooperation based on Comparative Advantage allows everyone to make meaningful contributions to group tasks;
- how the forces of Supply and Demand shape the prices of the goods we buy and the rewards earned for many different types of work;
- how, in the absence of competition, producers are able to set high prices that increase their profits to the detriment of society as a whole;
- how self-interest can impede cooperation that could lead to a better World and the role that institutions play in addressing these obstacles;

and hopefully much else besides.

Learning Objectives: Ultimately, my goals in this class are for you to be able to apply these concepts in your own lives, to think critically about them, and for you to be able to recognize social and global problems that matter to you as *economic* problems that Economics can be used to shed light on.

In addition, I seek to cultivate a *growth mindset* in all my Economics students. I want my classroom to be a welcoming environment where students see making mistakes as a normal part of the learning process and hold the belief that they can overcome things that challenge them at first through practice and dedication.

Aside from my own personal teaching goals, this course contributes to the new general education curriculum and to the Economics Department's learning objectives. As a Social Inquiry course, Principles of Microeconomics fulfills the following learning outcomes:

- Students will demonstrate knowledge of theories of human behavior appropriate to the discipline.
- Students will demonstrate the ability to use appropriate methods to analyze human behavior.
- Students will assess the limitations of the theories, explanations, and methods they study.

The departmental learning goals this class contributes towards are as follows:

- Objective 1.1: Students will produce solutions to economic problems using appropriate quantitative and qualitative techniques.
- Objective 1.2: Students will identify core issues and evaluate and apply evidence in support of a coherent position or recommendation.
- Objective 4.1: Students will demonstrate an understanding of economic theory and practical applications.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND POLICIES

EXAMS. There will be 3 exams in this class: **Midterm 1** on **Tuesday, February 20th**, **Midterm 2** on **Tuesday, April 2nd** and a (semi-cumulative) **Final Exam** to be held on **Friday May 3rd at 2pm**. I do not expect you to miss any of the examinations, but if it happens for a good reason, such as a serious illness or family emergency, you should contact me immediately. If you miss a midterm, you will have the chance to show me that you have mastered the material by taking a cumulative final covering the material for the final exam plus the material you have not been tested for. I also give credit for improvement throughout the course. For example, if you do considerably better on the final than on the midterm, your poor midterm grade will be discounted (but not ignored). This should give you an incentive to take all exams and quizzes. If you miss an exam or quiz without my prior consent, this may result in an "F."

PROBLEM SETS. There will be a short online problem set assigned along with the reading for each class, which will be designed to help with preparing the next class meeting and with your comprehension of the material. You are encouraged to discuss the assignments in groups but you should work through and think about the problems on your own before submitting. The submission deadline for these online assignments will usually be 9 am the morning of our next class meeting. In addition, there will be occasional written assignments which I will ask you to hand in via blackboard. These written assignments will give more of an overview of the material and help you prepare for the written portions of the exams. There may also be short essay assignments and/or essay portions of these assignments that ask you to apply concepts.

LATE HOMEWORK POLICY. For online homeworks, no late homework will be accepted, but I will drop the 2 problem sets with the lowest scores when calculating your final grade.

For written assignments, late homeworks will be accepted up until 6 pm that day (or some other time I may indicate). For the first late homework, I will subtract 2.5 points (out of 10). For the second I will subtract 5 points. Regretfully, any subsequent late homeworks will not be accepted.

As with the exams policy, flexibility on handing in a homework can be given if you have a very good reason, such as a serious illness or family emergency. In that case, you should contact me as soon as you are able to make me aware of your situation.

MORE ON ACHIEVE. Achieve is an online learning technology which will be used to give you practice questions to work on outside of class as well as allow me to see if any of the concepts need more coverage. Achieve will give you up to 5 opportunities to submit your answers to each question. For your 2nd-5th attempts, the program will explain the questions

you got wrong and then replace them with similar questions. The last time you submit your answers will be used to determine your grade. Some assignments are longer than others; thus I strongly advise you to start working on them well in advance of the deadline.

TEXTBOOK. I strongly encourage you to purchase or rent a copy of the textbook by Krugman and Wells. However, I do not require you to do so. While the class will largely follow the organization of the book (especially in the beginning of the class), at times I will deviate from the book to spend more time on certain topics I think are especially important or interesting. To be clear, the exams in this class will test you on what we go over in class; the main purpose of the book is to serve as a reference to help familiarize yourself with concepts to be covered before each lecture (as well as to help you reinforce them on your own afterwards).

A WORD ON COSTS. A new copy of the 5th edition of Krugman and Wells costs upwards of \$200. While I do encourage you to obtain a copy of the book to use with the course, you can find used and older editions of the book for substantially less. Please also note that you are required to purchase a subscription to Achieve, which will cost about ~\$40.

CLASS ATTENDANCE. I expect you to attend all classes if you are able. In case you are ill or are otherwise prevented from attending you should contact me in advance if possible. If circumstances require you to miss classes for an extended period of time, you should contact both me and the appropriate class dean. This said, I do not take attendance and your grade will not be hurt directly if you miss an occasional class. However, I generally find that students who come to class more not only get better grades but also gain more of an appreciation for the value of what they are learning. This includes coordinating with me on your continued participation if you are unable to attend physically due to risks associated with COVID-19. Also, please note that frequent unexcused absences (in excess of 25% of class meetings) will result in a failing grade for the course.

IN CLASS. I will expect you to come to class ready to participate in the learning process. Actively thinking along with the intuition and logic that ties the material together is crucial for building the economic reasoning skills you will need to earn a high grade. My previous experience also indicates it is very beneficial if you have read the chapter before class and worked carefully on assigned problem sets. The registrar's office generally recommends that you devote 10-14 hours per week to your coursework for each class, inclusive of time spent in class.

There will also be occasional opportunities to have in-class discussions relating what we study in class to current events in the world around us. While there is no formal participation grade, thoughtful participation and demonstrated effort will be taken into consideration when assigning final grades.

GRADING POLICY. The grade that you get in the class will be the grade that you have earned. The only time that I will be willing to change a grade is when I have made a mistake and it has been brought to my attention before the end of the semester. Your final grade will be determined as follows:

Online Assignments	(10%)
Written Assignments	(10%)
Exam I	(15%)
Exam II	(25%)
Final Exam	(40%)

For assigning letter grades, I prefer **5 point increments**. 95-100 is an A, 90-94 is an A-, 85-89 is a B+, and so on (B: 80-84: B. B-: 75-79. C+: 70-74. C: 65-69. C-: 60-64. D: 50-59. F: <50).

NOTE. In some of the work you do in this class, there will be essay questions of one form or another. Your grade on such questions will not be merely based on content. I will expect you to be able to express your thoughts in a smooth, clear, and logical sequence. Logical reasoning is crucially important in economics and while “choose the right answer” type questions can test your knowledge and critical thinking, essay-type questions are necessary to examine deep understanding of the material.

A WORD ON INTEGRITY. Violations of the Honor Code Statute in this class will not be tolerated and may result in severe academic sanctions. In order to familiarize yourself with the University of Richmond’s Honor Code as well as the policies in place regarding academic misconduct and dishonesty, you may refer to the following web site:

<http://studentdevelopment.richmond.edu/student-handbook/honor/the-honor-code.html>.

If you have any doubts or questions, please, consult with me.

“I’M STRUGGLING RIGHT NOW. HOW CAN I SUCCEED IN THIS CLASS?” First, please know that you are not alone. It’s common for college students to find their first Economics course to be deceptively challenging at first. The concepts we study in this class are seemingly simple (hence the word “Principles” in the name), but to get an A in this class requires that you are able to explain them in complete detail and apply them across a variety of different scenarios. Having just a grasp of the “basic idea” is not enough, nor is memorizing definitions. For those of you that are musically inclined, you can think of our class as like learning a musical instrument. You don’t just need to learn what the notes are, you need to learn how to play them. And that doesn’t necessarily come right away.

The good news is that students who stick with it after struggling at first invariably find that the course becomes easier and develop more of an appreciation for it. I can name several students walking the halls here at Richmond who did much worse than they would have

liked on the first exam only to rebound to get an A. Many others have made similar dramatic improvements. Believe it or not, I had my own upward battle as a student taking this class. It just takes time and effort being applied in the right direction.

With that said, here are some things you can do to reach a higher level in this class if you feel you are below where you want to be:

- After every single class, review what we covered that day. The outline for that day should include specific knowledge tasks that you should be expected to be able to perform. Review those carefully as you go and come up with questions if you're unsure about one of them.
- Practice as many problems as possible and practice those problems *multiple times*. Each time you work on a problem, try to notice something different about it and/or try to explain the answer to yourself in a slightly different way.
- Similarly, you should practice drawing the graphical examples we draw in this class multiple times. Again, try to actively explain the graph and what it conveys to yourself each time.
- When studying for exams, spend time practicing scenarios. You've seen questions asking about X, but make sure you're able to answer similar questions that instead ask about Y.
- Work with a study group. Articulating your own explanations of concepts and hearing them from others is incredibly valuable. I only know so many ways of explaining certain things, and sometimes it is just a matter of hearing something that "clicks" for you.
- Read the book outside of class. I encourage you to read it before class, especially if you feel the class itself is moving too fast, but students have also reported success reading the book after class to reinforce concepts.
- Talk to your professor! I want to know what's going on with you and I want to help.
- Finally, don't allow yourself to get discouraged. If you are finding this class challenging, treat that as good thing. Challenges give us opportunities for growth and, eventually, accomplishments we can be proud of.

UNIVERSITY OF RICHMOND POLICIES

Americans with Disabilities Act: Students with documented disabilities who need course accommodations, have emergency medical information or require special arrangements for building evacuation should submit an application to Disability Services and inform the instructor as quickly as possible so we may take steps to accommodate your needs. For further information, visit: <http://disability.richmond.edu/students/process/index.html>.

Course evaluation: Your feedback about the course and instructor is the only way instructors and academic units can improve the quality of a course and its content. Your honest feedback is greatly appreciated and will benefit students taking this course in the future.

Minimum attendance requirement: Students who are absent without a valid excuse for more than 25% of all scheduled classes will receive a grade of "V" (failure due to excessive absences) and no credit for the course.

What about COVID-19? Though COVID-19 is currently no longer the disruption to instruction it once was, the past few years have shown you never know what might happen. If new challenges related to COVID-19 arise during the semester, we will take it in stride and figure it out. Furthermore, if you need to miss class because you are sick and/or in quarantine, I want you to know I am committed to making sure you are able to keep up with this class and do so as painlessly as possible.

Religious observance: The University is a secular institution that values diversity of religious expression. The observance of religious holidays is considered a valid reason to be absent from class. If any of the course deadlines and/or exam dates conflict with the observance of your religious obligations, please inform your instructor ASAP.

Dropping a course or withdrawing from a course: Once a student is registered, it is his/her responsibility to attend the course, drop the course, or withdraw from the course. Dropping and withdrawing are distinct actions governed by different policies and impact a student's course enrollment status differently:

- Dropping a course causes the name of the course to disappear from the student's transcript.
- Withdrawing from a course causes both the name of the course and the grade of "M" (if withdrawing with a passing grade) or "W" (if withdrawing with a failing grade) to appear on the student's transcript. Before withdrawing from a course, students should consult the instructor.

For further information on these procedures, please see the following website:
<http://registrar.richmond.edu/services/policies/add-drop.html>.

Incomplete policy: A grade of "I" or "Y" may be given if the student's course work has not been completed by the end of the term. The "I" is a provisional failing grade, to be given

when the student's reasons for incomplete work are deemed unjustifiable by the instructor. The "Y", which does not count as a failing grade, is given when the student's reasons for not completing are deemed justifiable. In the case of an "I", the work is to be made up by a deadline to be set by the instructor, which may be no more than 45 days beyond the last day of the term. Otherwise, the "I" will become an "F". In the case of a "Y", it is still possible for the student to arrange with the instructor to complete the remaining requirements in order to receive a make-up grade.

Final exams: No final examinations will be given outside the examination period without the permission of the Dean. All final examinations are scheduled by the University Registrar.

University closure: During the course of a semester, it is possible the university will experience closure. Make-up assignments or make-up sessions of equivalent face-to-face length may be scheduled to make up for lost class time.

Resources for Students: The University offers a variety of services that may be helpful to students taking Economics and/or in navigating the many personal, social, and academic challenges they may encounter in a university environment. See, for example, the links for the Academic Skills Center and other counseling and community-building resources maintained at the following website: <http://commonground.richmond.edu/first-gen/resources.html>. There is also a dedicated Writing Center to help you develop your academic writing skills. See here: <http://writing.richmond.edu/>.

Course recordings: It's possible that some classes will be recorded. Class recordings of any type will be made available only to students registered for the course and should be used only for personal study by students enrolled in the course. In particular, students shall not disclose, share, trade, or sell class recordings with/to any other person, organization, business, or institution; and/or post/store these recordings in a location accessible by anyone other than the student, including but not limited to social media accounts.

Students must also comply with any instructions or directions from their faculty regarding the use of such recordings and are required to destroy them once no longer needed for the student's academic work. Failure to abide by this policy will be a violation of the Standards of Student Conduct and will be referred to the appropriate University Conduct Officer.

Other policies: More information on policies, procedures, and general governance may be found at the Provost's website. Specific policies and forms for the Robins School of Business are available in Blackboard.

COURSE OUTLINE

LECTURE #		TOPIC	READINGS
Lecture 1	T JAN 16	Course introduction. Introduction to Economics.	Intro, Ch. 1.
Lecture 2	Th JAN 18	Tradeoffs and Production Possibilities	Chapter 2
Lecture 3	T JAN 23	Comparative Advantage & Trade	Chapter 2, cont'd
Lecture 4	Th JAN 25	Comparative Advantage & Trade, continued	Chapter 2, cont'd
Lecture 5	T JAN 30	Intro Supply & Demand	Chapter 3
Lecture 6	Th FEB 1	Supply & Demand continued: Producer and Consumer Surplus; Utility	Ch. 10 ("Utility" only) Ch. 4 & 5
Lecture 7	T FEB 6	Catching up	
Lecture 8	Th FEB 8	Supply & Demand continued: Elasticity	Chapter 6
Lecture 9	T FEB 13	Supply & Demand continued: Effects of Taxation	Chapter 7
Lecture 10	Th FEB 15	Review Session	
	T FEB 20	MIDTERM I: February 20th, 2024	GOOD LUCK!
Lecture 11	Th FEB 22	Firm's Supply Curve in depth: Inputs and Costs	Chapter 11
Lecture 12	T FEB 27	Marginal Analysis (Firm Profit Maximization)	Chapter 9
Lecture 13	Th FEB 29	Catching up	
Lecture 14	T MAR 5	Firm Behavior in Perfectly Competitive Markets	Chapter 12
Lecture 15	Th MAR 7	Perfectly Competitive Markets, continued	Chapter 12
		SPRING BREAK	
Lecture 16	T MAR 19	Monopoly	Chapter 13
Lecture 17	Th MAR 21	Externalities	Chapter 16
Lecture 18	T MAR 26	Catching up	
Lecture 19	Th MAR 28	Review Session	
	T APR 2	MIDTERM II: April 2nd, 2024	GOOD LUCK!
Lecture 19	Th APR 4	Imperfect Competition I: Monopolistic Competition	Chapter 15
Lecture 20	T APR 9	Imperfect Competition II: Oligopoly, Intro to Game Theory	Ch. 14 & lecture notes
Lecture 21	Th APR 11	Game Theory continued	Ch. 14
Lecture 22	T APR 16	Public Goods	Chapter 17
Lecture 24	Th APR 18	International Trade re-visited	Ch. 8 & Lecture Notes
Lecture 25	T APR 23	Catching up	
Lecture 26	Th APR 25	Course Wrap-up and Review for Final Exam	
FINAL		FINAL EXAM: Fri., MAY 3 (link)	GOOD LUCK!!!