

# ECO 303 - Intermediate Microeconomics Theory

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Term: Fall 2020  
Sec 04: Online, Asynchronous.  
Office Hours: By Appointment, on Zoom

## 1 Course Description

This course develops the tools necessary to analyze the decisions made by consumers and firms. Consumer theory topics will include preferences, utility, optimal consumption under a budget constraint and aggregate demand. On the producer side, we will cover profit maximization, cost minimization, perfect competition, monopolies and oligopolies. Concepts of equilibrium, externalities, efficiency and social welfare will also be covered.

## 2 Textbook and Prerequisites

The required text for the course will be *Intermediate Microeconomics* by Hal Varian. The current version of the book is the ninth edition. An earlier version is acceptable, but please be aware that Chapter numbers differ across editions.

Students should have completed Econ 101 or 151. I will assume you understand basic vocabulary of economic terms and concepts. To succeed in this class, algebra skills are assumed. In addition, skill with graphs is extremely helpful. Using calculus will be needed to solve certain problems in the class. If you have not learned calculus in the past, necessary assistance will be provided.

## 3 Lectures and Quizzes

This class is designated as a Remote, Asynchronous class, which means all lectures will be prerecorded and posted Blackboard. Please see the class calendar for a tentative schedule of the dates on which these lectures will be delivered. Each lecture will have 4-5 segments, each segment will be 15-20 minutes long. Smaller segments will give you the flexibility of viewing parts of the lecture at a time. The lecture videos will be posted in the early morning on the scheduled dates. It is your responsibility to download/view them in a timely manner.

In each lecture video, you will see presentation slides with my voice over them. I will typically annotate and/or write down calculations by hand on these slides, so you can follow along discussions on important concepts and derivation of model results. I will post the annotated slides with hand-written notes on-line after the class.

There are two ways for me to monitor your progress in studying the lectures. (1) Panopto on Blackboard allows the instructor to view \*individual\* students' "minutes delivered" and

“percent completed” for each segment of the lecture. I will send you a warning Email if you have fallen behind in your lecture viewings. (2) There will be a weekly on-line quiz, consisting of multiple choice questions to see if you have a good grasp of the materials learned in that week. These short quizzes will be concept oriented, and you should get all of them correct if you have studied the lecture videos on time. I will post the quizzes on Friday morning each week, and you will have until Sunday at noon (12:00 pm) to complete the quiz. You must complete these quizzes on you own. You will \*not\* be allowed to take the quiz once the deadline is passed, and you will \*not\* be able to earn the quiz credit for that week.

## 4 Online Discussion Forum

If you find any parts of the lecture confusing or you need to ask a quick question regarding the class, you can use the lecture discussion forum I have created on Blackboard. You can create a new thread to ask questions on any class topics, and everyone can share their comments and discuss the same topic. I will get notification on any new threads/comments posted and join in the discussion as soon as I can. This forum is designed to mimic a classroom like environment, where everyone can raise a hand and ask professor questions and share the responses with everyone else.

I highly recommend this way of discussion. Due to the asynchronous nature of the class, this is a great way of fostering a sense of community and encourage class interaction and engagements. Also feel free to use the forum to share any economics related comments/discussions, for example, some news items that you can relate to the class.

## 5 Assignments

There will be 6 assignments. You are allowed to drop the lowest homework score (or submit only 5 homeworks without any penalty). Each assignment \*must\* be submitted on Blackboard by a specified due date/time. Please see all the submission deadlines on the course calendar. No late assignments will be accepted.

Different from the quizzes, questions on these assignments can be time-consuming, and they are designed to deepen your knowledge and will all involve some calculations, derivations, or graphing with multiple steps.

Due to the nature of electronic submissions, typed solutions are preferred. However, if you must hand-write your assignments, please make sure all the words and equations are neatly written, and all the graphs are clearly labeled. In the case of hand-written assignments, please carefully scan or photograph your written assignments, and upload them online. Messy or low resolution homeworks will NOT be accepted and will be given zero points for that assignment.

All the assignments are self-graded. This means you will need to submit each assignment twice on Blackboard. On the first submission, any reasonable effort will be assessed 50% of

the total homework grade. “Reasonable” means you must have worked on every problem on a particular assignment.

After the first submission deadline, an answer sheet will be posted online, along with grading guidelines. For this reason, *\*no\** late homeworks will be accepted! For the additional 50%, you must grade your own homework following the grading guidelines. Please score and comment on your *\*original\** homework. The graded homework will be submitted on a second specified deadline, usually 3-5 days after the first submission. I will compare the two submissions to make sure no cheating has occurred. In most cases, if you followed the grading guideline closely, I would agree with your gradings. In the cases I disagree with you, appropriate grade adjustments would be made, and I will give you feedbacks and comments on why specific adjustments are made. Allowing self-grading would give you a chance to learn from the homework a second time, and deepen your understanding of the course materials.

You are permitted and even encouraged to work with other students on assignments, as long as proper social distancing rules are followed. However, each student must write up his or her own version of a solution, and everyone who collaborated must be *\*acknowledged\** in the homework. When you solve a problem jointly, I expect you to then be able to look away from the group notes and reproduce the solution on your own. If not, you have learned nothing from the exercise, and are giving yourself a false sense of security about your understanding of the material. Moreover, **identical assignments will receive a score of zero.**

## 6 On-line Data Tasks

The college requires a few extra classes outside the normal teaching schedule. For these classes, you will complete 2-3 on-line data tasks. They are testing your ability gather and analyze data. I will post data sources and short instructions for those assignments. These instructions should be very straightforward in helping you access and navigate the necessary on-line data websites, so I will *not* go over them in class. However, if you need help with the data, please do not hesitate to contact me. You must complete these tasks individually.

## 7 Exams

There will be two midterms and one comprehensive final exam. The midterms are NOT cumulative, and they will be administered during a regular class day, please see the class calendar for the scheduled dates of the exams. The final is cumulative, and will be administered on the official College scheduled final exam date.

Before each midterm, you will be given a practice exam, and I will post a video showing you how to solve the questions on the practice exam on the scheduled dates (see class calendar).

All exams are \*open booked\*, and you may use your notes if you would like. However, you will have \*limited time\* to complete the exam, so studying on the fly will not be a viable option. Please download and print the exam booklet, and neatly hand write your answers in the booklet just like in an actual exam. Once you are done, please scan/photograph the exam and upload it to blackboard. Alternatively, if you do not have access to a printer, please write out your answers neatly using pieces of white paper or notebook paper, then scan and upload. In the alternative scenario, you do not need to copy down the questions, but please make sure you write down the question numbers so I can follow your answers.

Questions will be similar in format to those on homework assignments and practice exams. No cooperation is allowed during the tests, and any attempts of dishonesty will be punished with as much severity as the College permits.

There will be no make-up exams for midterm exams. If you are in a different time zone, and need to take the exam at a different time, you need to contact me in the beginning of the semester so necessary arrangements can be made. If you need to miss a midterm exam, you must notify me with a written/email request at least 24 hours before the exam. Any reason for missing a midterm is accepted, as long as the request is submitted to me before the deadline. Please note that I do NOT cancel or drop grades after the deadline. In the case of a dropped exam, the points from that exam will then be automatically moved to your final exam, so you don't lose the opportunity to gain those points.

The final exam will be held on the university scheduled Final Exam date. It will be open-booked and time-limited, just like the midterms. The only valid reasons for requesting a makeup final exam would be: (1) A documented College sponsored events; (2) A documented medical emergency; (3) Some other documented extraordinary events. If one of these apply to you and you need to reschedule the final exam, you must first submit a request to the office of the Dean of Undergraduate Studies, and then I will need to sign off on your request.

## 8 Grading

Your final class grade is based on your performance in assignments, data tasks and exams. A total of 100 points are possible for the course. They are distributed as follows: Homework assignments (each 100 points) - 15%; Online quizzes - 10%; Data tasks - 5%; Midterm 1 - 15%; Midterm 2 - 15%; Final - 40%.

If you disagree with the grading of an exam, you may resubmit it for my review. I will expect you to have a written argument for why you should be awarded more points. Also, please submit these disputes within one week of the exam return date.

### Grading Scale:

A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	F
	92.9%	89.9%	86.9%	82.9%	79.9%	76.9%	72.9%	69.9%	66.9%	62.9%	
$\geq$	to	to	to	to	to	to	to	to	to	to	$<$
93%	90%	87%	83%	80%	77%	73%	70%	67%	63%	60%	59.9%

Please carefully note that I do *\*not\** curve grades, and the grade scales above are ABSOLUTELY firm. This means, for example, if you get a class score of 89.99, you will absolutely get a B+, not a A-.

## 9 Class Communication and Office Hours

E-mails will be the primary way of communicating with me. Emails will generally be answered within 24 hours. However, emailing me the evening before homework due date or an exam will not guarantee you a response. When emailing, please use your official WM email, emails from any other accounts will be disregarded! Also, please clearly state your name and your class (ECON 303 - Intermediate Microeconomics) in the subject line, or your email will generally be ignored.

There will not be any traditional face-to-face office hours. However, there will be ten 15-minute slots each week for me to join you in an individual live Zoom session to help you on class materials. Each student can sign up for *\*at most\** two slots per week (30 minutes). These slots are available on a first-come-first-serve basis. I will typically be available on our assigned class times, and will make an announcement on the specific time slots. Please email me to sign up in the beginning of a week. In your sign up email, please let me know your name (or names if you have a group that would like to join in at the same time), and your preferred time slots for meeting. You can also email me to arrange a change of meeting time if none of the time slots work for you. I will send you (or your group) a confirmation and a Zoom meeting link in the reply email.

## 10 Academic Honor Policy:

You are expected to follow the William & Mary Honor Code. If I discover any academic misconduct, I will initiate an Honor Council proceeding and recommend failure of the course. If you have any questions about how the Honor Code relates to this course, feel free to talk to me or refer to the Student Handbook and the William & Mary Honor Council's website.