Principles of Microeconomics

Last Updated: Fri, 08/01/2025

Course prefix: ECON

Course number: 2106

Section: GT5

CRN (you may add up to five):
83228

Instructor First Name: Robert

Instructor Last Name: Harris

Semester: Fall

Academic year: 2025

Course description:

Microeconomics is the study of individual, human decision-making. In this course, you will learn to think like an economist, using conceptual frameworks such as preferences, incentives, supply, demand, competition, markets, and prices to understand human behavior. The tools of economic analysis provide a powerful lens to evaluate government policies, understand business strategies, and make decisions in your own life. Economists use the tools of microeconomics to study all aspects of life, ranging from business to the environment, and even to dating and marriage! How should a firm decide how much output to produce and what price to set? How can one evaluate the tradeoffs between economic outputs and environmental costs? We will discuss the applied economics of these and many other real-world examples throughout the course.

Course learning outcomes:

This course aims to equip students with the microeconomic tools and intuition necessary to (1) understand phenomena in public policy, business, and everyday life, (2) anticipate agent responses to incentives, (3) identify opportunity costs, tradeoffs, and comparative advantage, and (4) make choices based on marginal benefits and marginal costs (i.e., think on the margin). In essence, students will learn to *think like economists*.

Required course materials:

Cowen, Tyler and Alex Tabarrok. *Modern Principles: Microeconomics, 6th edition* (2024). Macmillan.

You must purchase the textbook from the publisher or from the bookstore to get access to the online homework system Achieve. A physical copy of the textbook is not required. If you

do not purchase a copy of the textbook and cannot complete the homework, you will not receive credit for the assignment, so please do not delay purchasing the textbook.

While you are waiting for the textbook access code to arrive, you can start a free trial or "grace" period. See the instructions on Canvas for more information.

You can access the Achieve homework system within the course's Canvas site in the Macmillan Learning tab.

Grading policy:

Graded assignments and tests serve three purposes (among others):

1. To serve as a mechanism to incentivize and facilitate student effort and learning.
2. To provide feedback to the instructor about instructor effectiveness and to provide feedback to the student about current performance in the course.
3. To certify student achievement to the Institute and to future employers.

Thus, I will assign problems that are graded as a pass/fail for completion (LearningCurve homework assignments) to incentivize you to read the course materials, short, graded homework assignments to engage you in learning and to provide feedback before exams, and exams to evaluate your overall performance in the course. In addition, lecture attendance and participation will be measured via a digital polling platform.

Material	**Possible points**	**Approx. weight**
LearningCurve homework assignments (5 points/chapter)	80	8.7%
Graded homework assignments (10 points/chapter)	160	17.4%
Class attendance and participation (PointSolutions)	80	8.7%
Midterm exam 1	150	16.3%
Midterm exam 2	150	16.3%
Final exam (comprehensive)	300	32.6%
Total:	**920**	100%
Extra credit	~20	~2.2%

There are 920 possible points for graded assignments in the course, thus your final grade is the number of points you earn (plus extra credit) divided by 920. Your final grades transfer to the Georgia Tech grading system as follows:

Letter grade	GPA	Description	Grade range (using interval notation)
A	4.0	Excellent	$[90\%, 100\%]$
B	3.0	Good	$[80\%, 90\%)$
C	2.0	Satisfactory	$[70\%, 80\%)$
D	1.0	Passing	$[60\%, 70\%)$
F	0.0	Failure	$[0\%, 60\%)$

In reading interval notation, left square brackets indicate “greater than or equal to.” Right parentheses indicate “less than.” Thus, for instance, grades greater than or equal to 80% but less than 90% will earn a B.

Note that grades are not rounded up (e.g., 89.99% is still a B). I reserve the right to increase all final grades equally if the material is more difficult than expected, but this is unlikely. At the end of the semester, your final grade cannot be changed with extra credit or makeup opportunities; this is for fairness to all students.

Attendance policy:

Attendance is strongly encouraged, as students who regularly attend class learn more and earn higher grades. To incentivize attendance, we will use a digital polling platform called PointSolutions to track lecture attendance and measure understanding of course material in real-time. Polls will be graded for accuracy and will be included in the participation component of your grade. Therefore, you are expected to bring an internet-enabled device to every lecture. Instructions for creating an account and linking it to Canvas are posted on Canvas. To avoid concerns about excused vs. unexcused absences, mobile/web devices not working, polls closing before you can submit, etc., I will drop the bottom 10% of poll scores. No other exceptions will be made.

Academic honesty/integrity statement:

“I commit to uphold the ideals of honor and integrity by refusing to betray the trust bestowed upon me as a member of the Georgia Tech community.”

Georgia Tech aims to cultivate a community based on trust, academic integrity, and honor. Students are expected to act according to the highest ethical standards. For information on Georgia Tech's Academic Honor Code, please visit http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/policies/honor-code/ or http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/rules/18/. Academic integrity is extremely important to me.

Any student suspected of cheating or plagiarizing on an exam or assignment will be reported to the Office of Student Integrity, who will investigate the incident and identify the appropriate penalty for violations.

Core IMPACTS statement(s) (if applicable):

This is a Core IMPACTS course that is part of the Social Sciences area.

Core IMPACTS refers to the core curriculum, which provides students with essential knowledge in foundational academic areas. This course will help master course content, and support students' broad academic and career goals.

This course should direct students toward a broad Orienting Question:

- How do I understand human experiences and connections?

Completion of this course should enable students to meet the following Learning Outcomes:

- Students will effectively analyze the complexity of human behavior, and how historical, economic, political, social or geographic relationships develop, persist or change.

Course content, activities and exercises in this course should help students develop the following Career-Ready Competencies:

- Intercultural Competence
- Perspective-Taking
- Persuasion