



ECON 306

Intermediate Economics

Department of Economics

George Mason University

Spring 2023

Instructor: Olga Shanks
Contact: ostaradu@gmu.edu
Class Meetings: asynchronous
Class Location: Blackboard
Office Hours: by appointment

Course Description:

Intermediate Microeconomics is a fascinating but challenging course. Prepare to work hard and learn a lot. We will cover consumer theory and producer theory and show how exchange between market participants brings about an equilibrium. We will examine the efficiency implications of equilibriums reached under different conditions, including the free market, monopoly, government intervention, and in circumstances involving externalities and public goods. We will also dip our toes into game theory.

Textbook:

Varian, H. R. (2020). Intermediate microeconomics: a modern approach: ninth edition. W.W. Norton & Company.

Smartwork5:

You **must** purchase access to Smartwork5 for this course. You have three options for buying your learning materials:

1. Buy a new printed book. It will have a code inside that will allow you to access Smartwork5.
2. Buy a used book and buy access to Smartwork5 separately.
3. Buy the electronic version of the book and access to Smartwork5 together.

All three options require you to purchase access to Smartwork5, which you can do using the link provided on Blackboard. Blackboard also has a short tutorial on how to purchase your materials.

If you have trouble accessing Smartwork5 or the eBook, please submit a support ticket at <https://support.wwnorton.com/request>.

Course Website:

The course website on Blackboard is accessible through <https://mymasonportal.gmu.edu>. You will use Blackboard to find lecture videos and slides, links to homework assignments, class announcements, and other materials.

Course Structure:

This course is an asynchronous online course, which means that instead of coming to class, you watch my pre-recorded lectures on Blackboard. You can reach out to me by email to ask questions or to request a separate Zoom meeting. I welcome student engagement and encourage students to meet with me!

The course is broken into weeks, where each week has lecture videos and assignments or an exam. Your assignments will be either problem sets which you will complete and submit in Smartwork5 or essay assignments which you will submit on Blackboard. The deadline for homework submission is **Sunday at 11:59pm** of the relevant week. Late submissions are allowed but will be graded with a 10% penalty for each day past the due date.

We will have three exams: Midterm 1, Midterm 2, and Final. We will use Respondus LockDown Browser for the exams (see the detailed section on it below). You will have a 2-day window to access each exam and 2 hours to complete it once started. If you require an extension for a medical or family emergency reason, reach out to me so we can find a solution. If you miss an exam for any other reason, you forfeit your exam points.

Grading:

Homework assignments – 30%

Midterm 1 – 20%

Midterm 2 – 20%

Final – 30%

Grade Score

A+ 97-100

A 93-96

A- 90-92

B+ 87-89

B 83-86

B- 80-82

C+ 77-79

C 73-76

C- 70-72

F 69 and Below

Course Calendar:

Note: I reserve the right to make changes to the course calendar provided I give you a 2-week notice.

Week #	Dates	Chapters	Homework	Homework Due Date
1	Jan 23 - Jan 29	Math Review 1. The Market	Syllabus Quiz Math Quiz Smartwork5: Ch1	Jan 29 at 11:59pm
2	Jan 30 - Feb 5	2. Budget Constraint 3. Preferences	Smartwork5: Ch2 and Ch3	Feb 5 at 11:59pm
3	Feb 06 - Feb 12	4. Utility 5. Choice	Smartwork5: Ch4 and Ch5	Feb 12 at 11:59pm
4	Feb 13 - Feb 19	6. Demand 15. Market Demand	Smartwork5: Ch6 Ch15	Feb 19 at 11:59pm
5	Feb 20 - Feb 26	32. Exchange (up to Section 32.8) “The Use of Knowledge in Society” by Friedrich Hayek	Smartwork5: Ch32 Essay	Feb 26 at 11:59pm
6	Feb 27 - Mar 5	Midterm 1: Feb 2 – Feb 3		
7	Mar 6 - Mar 12	19. Technology “The Nature of the Firm” by Ronald Coase	Smartwork5: Ch19 Essay	Mar 12 at 11:59pm
8	Mar 13 - Mar 19	<i>Spring Recess</i>		
9	Mar 20 - Mar 26	20. Profit Maximization (Sections 20.5-20.10) 21. Cost Minimization 22. Cost Curves	Smartwork5: Ch20, Ch21, and Ch22	Mar 26 at 11:59pm
10	Mar 27 - Apr 2	23. Firm Supply 24. Industry Supply	Smartwork5: Ch23 and Ch24	Apr 2 at 11:59pm
10	Apr 3 - Apr 9	25. Monopoly “Market Power and Regulation” from nobelprize.org about Jean Tirole	Smartwork5: Ch25 Essay	Apr 9 at 11:59pm
11	Apr 10 - Apr 16	Midterm 2: Apr 13-14		
12	Apr 17 - Apr 23	29. Game Theory 30. Game Applications	Smartwork5: Ch29 and Ch30	Apr 23 at 11:59pm
13	Apr 24 - Apr 30	“The problem of Social Cost” by Ronald Coase “Toward the Theory of Property Rights” by Harold Demsetz	Essay	Apr 30 at 11:59pm
14	May 1 - May 7	37. Public Goods “A Behavioral Approach to the Rational Choice Theory of Collective Action” by Elinor Ostrom	Smartwork5: Ch37 Essay	May 7 at 11:59pm
15	May 8 - May 14	Final Exam: May 11-12		

Email Policy:

Please email me only using your @gmu.edu email account. I will not respond to communication coming from other email addresses. I will try to respond to your emails as soon as possible, but please allow 24 hours for a response. To respect both your and my weekends, if you email me after 5pm on Friday, I will respond by 5pm on Monday.

Respondus LockDown Browser

This course requires the use of LockDown Browser and a webcam for online exams. The webcam can be built into your computer (internal webcam) or can be the type of webcam that plugs in with a USB cable (external webcam). Watch [this short video](#) to get a basic understanding of LockDown Browser and the webcam feature. A [Quick Start Guide for Students](#) is also available.

- You will need the following system requirements for online exams:
 - Windows: 10, 8, 7
 - Mac: OS X 10.10 or higher
 - iOS: 10.0+ (iPad only). Must have a compatible LMS integration.
 - Web camera (internal or external) & microphone
 - A reliable internet connection
 - Prior to your first exam, you must install LockDown Browser following the step-by-step instructions.
- To ensure LockDown Browser and the webcam are set up properly, do the following:
 - Start LockDown Browser, log into Blackboard and select this course.
 - Locate and select the Help Center button on the LockDown Browser toolbar.
 - Run the Webcam Check and, if necessary, resolve any issues or permissions your computer prompts.
 - Run the System & Network Check. If a problem is indicated, see if a solution is provided in the Knowledge Base. Further troubleshooting is available through the ITS Support Center.
 - Exit the Help Center and locate the practice quiz.
 - Upon completing and submitting the practice quiz, exit LockDown Browser.
- When taking an online exam that requires LockDown Browser and a webcam, remember the following guidelines:
 - Ensure you're in a location where you won't be interrupted
 - Turn off all other devices (e.g. tablets, phones, second computers) and place them outside of your reach
 - Clear your desk of all external materials not permitted — books, papers, phones, other devices
 - Before starting the test, know how much time is available for it, and that you've allotted sufficient time to complete it
 - Remain at your computer for the duration of the test. Make sure that your computer is plugged into a power source, or that battery is fully charged.
 - If the computer or networking environment is different than what was used previously with the Webcam Check and System & Network Check in LockDown Browser, run the checks again prior to starting the test
- To produce a good webcam video, do the following:
 - Do not wear a baseball cap or hat with a brim that obscures your face

- Ensure your computer or tablet is on a firm surface (a desk or table). Do NOT have the computer on your lap, a bed, or any other surface where the device (or you) are likely to move
- If using a built-in (internal) webcam, avoid tilting the screen after the webcam setup is complete
- Take the exam in a well-lit room and avoid backlighting, such as sitting with your back to a window
- Remember that LockDown Browser will prevent you from accessing other websites or applications; you will be unable to exit the test until all questions are completed and submitted

Academic Integrity:

The integrity of the University community is affected by the individual choices made by each of us. Mason has an Honor Code with clear guidelines regarding academic integrity. Three fundamental and rather simple principles to follow at all times are that: (1) all work submitted be your own; (2) when using the work or ideas of others, including fellow students, give full credit through accurate citations; and (3) if you are uncertain about the ground rules on a particular assignment, ask for clarification. No grade is important enough to justify academic misconduct. Plagiarism means using the exact words, opinions, or factual information from another person without giving the person credit. Writers give credit through accepted documentation styles, such as parenthetical citation, footnotes, or endnotes. Paraphrased material must also be cited, using the appropriate format for this class. A simple listing of books or articles is not sufficient. Plagiarism is the equivalent of intellectual robbery and cannot be tolerated in the academic setting. If you have any doubts about what constitutes plagiarism, please see me.

Disability Accommodations

Disability Services at George Mason University is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students by upholding the laws that ensure equal treatment of people with disabilities. If you are seeking accommodations for this class, please first visit <http://ds.gmu.edu/> for detailed information about the Disability Services registration process. Then please discuss your approved accommodations with me. Disability Services is located in Student Union Building I (SUB I), Suite 2500. Email: ods@gmu.edu, phone: (703) 993-2474.

Diversity and Inclusion

I am committed to fostering a diverse and inclusive environment where all students, regardless of their identity, race, economic status, sex, sexuality, ethnicity, national origin, first language, religion, age and ability, are respected and valued for their unique perspectives and experiences. I strive to create a learning space where everyone feels safe to share their ideas and contribute to the class discussion.

Sexual Harassment, Sexual Misconduct, and Interpersonal Violence

As a faculty member, I am designated as a “Non-Confidential Employee,” and must report all disclosures of sexual assault, sexual harassment, interpersonal violence, stalking, sexual exploitation, complicity, and retaliation to Mason’s Title IX Coordinator per University Policy

1202. If you wish to speak with someone confidentially, please contact one of Mason's confidential resources, such as Student Support and Advocacy Center (SSAC) at 703-993-3686 or Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at 703-993-2380. You may also seek assistance or support measures from Mason's Title IX Coordinator by calling 703-993-8730, or emailing titleix@gmu.edu.