

ECON 100 Introduction to Economics

Washington and Lee University, Fall 2019

Course Information

Class Meetings

- Section 03: Monday, Wednesday, Friday, 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM, Huntley Room 301
- Section 05: Monday, Wednesday, Friday, 12:15 PM - 1:15 PM, Huntley Room 301

Instructor: Professor Matthew Naven

Office: Huntley 213

Office Hours: Monday - Thursday 3:00 PM - 4:00 PM and by appointment

Email: mnaven@wlu.edu

I don't check email on my phone, and I only check and respond to my email between 9:00 AM and 5:00 PM Monday through Friday. If you're anything like me as an undergrad, this will probably be the exact opposite times of when you're sending emails. Keep this in mind if you want a question answered promptly. I'll do my best to respond to emails quickly within that timeframe, so if I haven't gotten back to you in a couple of days don't hesitate to send a follow up because I may have just lost your email in my inbox. Also note that an email sent late in the day may not get answered until the following day (or week if it's a Friday).

Piazza Website: piazza.com/wlu/fall2019/econ100/home

Piazza is a tool that encourages students to collaborate with their classmates. If you have a question about any of the material you can post the question to Piazza and your fellow classmates have the opportunity to provide assistance. I have the ability to endorse answers that students provide which I will use to verify correct answers. If no students can come up with the correct answer then I may provide an answer myself.

I've found Piazza to be helpful to both myself as the instructor as well as students. Some students find it easier to ask questions of their peers than the professor, and Piazza gives them an opportunity to do so (but please don't feel intimidated about coming to my office hours or emailing me!). On the other hand,

many students, especially at a liberal arts college, enjoy helping their peers or appreciate the opportunity to master material by teaching it to others. Piazza also gives students an opportunity to have questions answered outside of the hours when I check my email.

Piazza is helpful to me because students tend to struggle with the same topics, and I often receive many emails with the exact same question. By having the question posted to Piazza once, with an answer that is publicly available to everyone in the class regardless if they asked the question, the question also has to be answered only once. This saves a lot of repetitive typing for me. The question and answer are a public good that benefits all students struggling with the same material.

Using Piazza is in no way required for the course, but I encourage you to at least give it a try or see if another student has asked a similar question before shooting me an email. Note that the purpose of Piazza is to provide *help* in the form of explaining how to solve questions as opposed to just giving the final answer.

Website: www.matthewnaven.com/teaching/2019-2020

My website has a link to the syllabus as well as other information for the class.

Course Overview

Economics is the study of how individuals, firms, and governments allocate scarce resources. The goal of this course is to get students to see the world through the lens of an economist. Economists often analyze issues in quite different ways than their peers, with a focus on costs, benefits, incentives, and *ceteris paribus* ("all else equal") analysis that holds other factors constant. This often entails developing formal models - both graphically and algebraically - that explain the world around us. This course will focus both on microeconomics, which focuses on individual consumers and firms, as well as macroeconomics, which focuses on how individual consumers and firms aggregate to form a complex economy in its entirety. We will also study how public policy can be used to improve the well-being of individuals and firms and promote economic growth.

Economic analysis is often used, and perhaps more often misused, when discussing social and political issues. Thus, understanding basic economic principles is a critical component of being an informed citizen that contributes to society. This course places a strong emphasis on critical thinking and will hopefully change the way students analyze seemingly noneconomic issues that arise in their everyday lives. A solid foundation in economics has become an important asset for careers in law, journalism, public policy, medicine, education, international relations, business and many other areas.

For many students, economics will be an entirely new way of looking at issues. Some students will find this thought process intuitive, while others may struggle with the concepts or resist this new way of thinking. If you find yourself questioning or struggling with the material I encourage you to work with other students in the class

or stop by my office hours so that we can discuss the issues in more detail!

Required Materials

N. Gregory Mankiw, *Principles of Economics*, 8th edition

[MindTap](#)

In order to access the MindTap materials, students must go to <http://getenrolled.com/> and enter the course key **MTPNKCHNX3H3** or enter the course link <https://www.cengage.com/dashboard/#/course-confirmation/MTPNKCHNX3H3/initial-course-confirmation>.

Course Requirements

Your grade will be determined as follows:

Component	Percentage
Participation	10%
Article or Seminar Review	5%
Assignments	10%
Exam 1	25%
Exam 2	25%
Final Exam	25%

There will *likely* be an (as yet undetermined) curve for the course. If a curve is implemented at the conclusion of the course, it will *only* positively affect your grade (i.e. your percentage grade will not drop due to the curve). I prefer to grade strictly in order to create a grade distribution with a large variance, which I can then modify with a curve as I see fit.

Participation

There are three components to the participation score:

1. I ask that all students be mindful during our one hour class period. While I encourage students to practice mindfulness in the other aspects of their life, I only require it for three hours of each week. The purpose of our class time is to learn economics, and I ask students to give their undivided attention. In particular, this

means not using phones, tablets, or computers during class. If I see your phone (i.e. it's on the table) even if you're not using it, then note that you will be losing participation points. You may even be surprised to notice that you enjoy the reduced anxiety from not constantly checking notifications.

2. Ask questions and contribute to discussions, keeping in mind that others may share your confusion or learn from your insights. Asking questions is a positive externality, as the answers to those questions become a public good that all students in the class can benefit from. This is the most important determinant of your participation grade.
3. Respect your fellow students by behaving professionally. This includes arriving on time, not leaving class unnecessarily, and, in particular, not using phones, tablets, or computers. I list this twice because phones, tablets, and computers are not only a distraction to those who use them but also to everyone else around them. Note that if I see your phone, tablet, or computer, I will oblige you to internalize the negative externality by reducing your participation score.

Article or Seminar Review

Students are required to attend one public talk on an economics-related topic or read one newspaper article and submit a report summarizing the content and explaining how economic principles apply to the topic.

The purpose of the assignment is to see how the economic concepts that we learn in class apply to your everyday life. First you should write a brief summary of the topic under the assumption that I'm unaware of the policies or issues that are being discussed. Second, you should identify and describe which economic concepts are relevant to the topic. You could discuss how economic thinking was used to predict the implications of a policy, or perhaps you can discuss how economic analysis was misused by the author or policymakers. You could also discuss how exogenous shifts would impact the equilibrium outcome. I'm allowing for some flexibility so that students may choose the topics and economic concepts that most interest them, and I explicitly encourage students to choose topics that at their surface don't appear to fall under the umbrella of economics. Please ask me if you would like any clarification on what I'm looking for.

I will announce relevant talks as they are scheduled. Reputable newspapers include: The Economist, NPR, the BBC, The Associated Press, Reuters, ProPublica, The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, The Washington Post, The New Yorker, National Review, The Atlantic, and Politico. If you want to use a newspaper article from another source, please double check with me to make sure that it is considered a reputable source.

Assignments

There will be a MindTap assignment for each textbook chapter we cover. The purpose of these assignments is for students to better understand the material, as students often believe they understand a topic until they are asked to utilize that knowledge in practice. Given the purpose of the assignments, I will accept late assignments one day after their due date for a 50 percentage point reduction. For example, if an assignment is due on September 1st and a student completes the assignment by September 2nd with a score of 75%, then

they will receive a score of 25% for the assignment. I will also drop the lowest assignment score.

Exams

There will be two evening exams. The dates and times of these exams are on the schedule below.

As with our instruction time, phones, tablets, and computers are absolutely banned from being visible during exams. They must be turned off and placed in your backpack for the duration of the exam. In particular, this means that phones cannot be on top of your desk or in your hands when using the restroom. Any student with technology visible during the exam will be in violation of this policy.

Final Exam

The final exam will be based almost entirely on material covered after the second exam, but is comprehensive in the fact that later topics build on the foundation laid out by prior topics. The final exam will be administered through the Williams School during exam week.

Honor System

I expect students to follow the honor system with regards to all coursework and exams. You are not allowed to use any answer keys to complete assignments. Phones, tablets, and computers must be turned off and placed in your backpack for the duration of the exam. In particular, this means that phones cannot be on top of your desk or in your hands when using the restroom. However, I encourage students to collaborate both when working on assignments and studying for exams. One of the best ways to master a topic is to teach it to someone who doesn't understand it.

Academic Accommodations

I am committed to ensuring access to course content for all students. Reasonable accommodations are available for students with disabilities. Contact Lauren Kozak, Title IX Coordinator and Director of Disability Resources, to confidentially discuss your individual needs and the accommodation process. More information can be found at <https://www.wlu.edu/disability-accommodations/undergraduate-accommodations>.

If you have already been approved for accommodations, please meet with me within the first two weeks of the term so we can develop an implementation plan together. It is important to meet as early in the term as possible; this will ensure that your accommodations are implemented early on. If you have accommodations for test-taking, please remember that arrangements must be made at least a week before the date of the test or exam.

Topics and Tentative Schedule

Date	Topic	Textbook Reading
9/6	Introduction; production possibilities	Ch. 2, pp. 24–26; Ch. 3, pp. 47–52
9/9	Comparative advantage and trade	Ch. 3, pp. 52–58
9/11	Demand and supply	Ch. 4, pp. 65–72
9/13	Demand and supply	Ch. 4, pp. 73–85
9/16	Elasticity	Ch. 5, pp. 89–96, 99–107
9/18	Surplus and efficiency	Ch. 7, pp. 133–143
9/20	Surplus and efficiency	Ch. 7, pp. 143–149
9/23	Price controls	Ch. 6, pp. 111–120
9/25	Taxes	Ch. 6, pp. 120–127; Ch. 8, pp. 153–158
9/27	Catch-up day	
9/30	Exam 1 (Monday evening, 7–9pm, Huntley 327)	
10/2	Costs of production	Ch. 13, pp. 247–253
10/4	Costs of production	Ch. 13, pp. 254–259
10/7	Perfect competition	Ch. 16, pp. 319–322; Ch. 14, pp. 267–273
10/9	Perfect competition	Ch. 14, pp. 273–281
10/11	No class (Reading days)	
10/14	Monopoly	Ch. 15, pp. 289–300
10/16	Monopoly; oligopoly	Ch. 15, pp. 300–308; Ch. 17, pp. 337–342
10/18	Externalities	Ch. 10, pp. 189–195
10/21	Externalities	Ch. 10, pp. 195–199, 202–206
10/23	Public goods and common	Ch. 11, pp. 211–223

	resources	
10/25	Catch-up day	
10/28	Exam 2 (Monday evening, 7–9pm, Huntley 327)	
10/30	Measuring income	Ch. 23, pp. 473–484, 486–491
11/1	Measuring real GDP and inflation	Ch. 24, pp. 495–501
11/4	Unemployment	Ch. 28, pp. 577–596
11/5 Makeup Class	Economic growth	Ch. 25, pp. 515–524
11/6	Economic growth	Ch. 25, pp. 525–538
11/8 Class Cancelled		
11/11	The financial system and debt	Ch. 26, pp. 541–554
11/13	The financial system and debt	Ch. 26, pp. 554–557; Ch. 36, pp. 802–805
11/15	Money and the Fed	Ch. 29, pp. 609–611, 616–622; Ch. 30, pp. 629–634, 640–642
11/18	Aggregate demand and aggregate supply	Ch. 33, pp. 701–713, 716–733
11/20	Monetary and fiscal policy	Ch. 34, pp. 737–747
11/22	Monetary and fiscal policy	Ch. 34, pp. 747–753; 758
12/2	Open economy macro basics	Ch. 31, pp. 653–665, 667–672
12/4	Open economy macro model	Ch. 32, pp. 677–695
12/6	Catch-up day	