

Microeconomics --- Economics 105
Class meets in Biddle 124, TuTh 9:30-10:50
Dr. Tom McGahagan
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Spring 2011-12
Office: Biddle 122B
Office Hours: 9-10 AM MWF; 8:30-9:30 TTh
<http://www.pitt.edu/~upjecon>

SYLLABUS

Course description and objectives:

Economics 105 is part of a two-semester introduction to economics. Its objectives are:

1. to familiarize the student with the basic concepts and methods of microeconomics -- the study of how consumers and producers make their decisions and interact in markets, under conditions of perfect and imperfect competition.

2. to enable the student to apply these concepts and methods to policy issues . One important set of policy issues is whether, when, and how markets may fail and whether, when they fail, government intervention may be needed to correct those failures.

3. to lay the groundwork for future study: for the study of macroeconomic issues such as unemployment, inflation and long-run economic growth; and more generally for such courses as managerial accounting and management decision-making, as well as economics courses in finance, labor, and international economics, which require mastery of basic microeconomic concepts.

Course prerequisites:

There are no specific course prerequisites; students are however expected to have a basic background in algebra. Students are expected to be able to draw a graph based on an algebraic equation, to manipulate equations and solve simple simultaneous equations.

Textbook:

Tyler Cowen and Alex Tabarrok, *Modern Principles: Microeconomics* 2nd edition.
Worth Publishers, 2011.

Website: <http://www.pitt.edu/~upjecon> is the UPJ Economics Department website.

Click on my name (just to the left of the UPJ logo on the opening screen) to get to my course pages. The syllabus, web links, announcements, sample past exams and other helpful material will be on the website; visit it early and often.

Office: 122B Biddle Hall. **Office Hours:** 9-10 MWF, 8:30-9:30 Tue Th.

Don't hesitate to drop in and ask a quick question anytime, even outside of office hours. My e-mail address is mgahagan@pitt.edu if you need to set up a special appointment outside of office hours.

Course outline and exam schedule:

Since this is the first time I am using this textbook, the course outline and exam schedule will be works in progress. Check the course website for updates, but expect changes as we go along. I can say that my expected schedule is to cover the first 4 chapters (Intro, Trade, Supply and Demand, and Equilibrium) on the first exam, tentatively scheduled for Thursday, Feb. 2, and chapters 5-10 (Elasticity, Taxes, Price System, International Trade, Externalities) on the second exam, tentatively scheduled for Thursday, March 1. The third exam, covering chapters 11-14 (Costs, Competition, Monopoly, and price discrimination, will be held after the spring break (date to be announced). The final is scheduled for Friday, April 27, in the

assigned classroom.

Study hints:

This course is a foundational course for many later courses in economics and business. More than passive recognition of concepts and terms is expected -- you are expected to master the basic concepts and to be able to apply them.

The only method I know of getting to that level of performance involves two steps:

1. Read the material carefully, and make sure you know the basic terminology. Everyone knows terms such as "price", "value" and "cost" -- but can you distinguish their meanings?
2. Work the problems. Cowen and Tabarrok have devoted a good deal of thought and care to writing problems that not only test your understanding of the material, but are often models of how to apply the basic techniques presented in the text to more complicated real-life situations.

If you are having difficulty, ask questions of your instructor (see my office hours above; feel free to drop by outside of my office hours as well). Also, check to see whether the Learning Center has a tutor available (I have recommended several potential tutors to them, they usually have managed to get at least one, and students using the tutors often improved their scores considerably).

See my web page for more hints on "Mastering Economics" (just below the table of courses).

Exams and Grading:

There will be three in-term exams and a final exam. Make-ups will be granted only for serious and documented reason. You must pass at least two of the in-term exams in order to pass the course.

Use of unauthorized materials or communication with other students during an exam or quiz or leaving the room during an exam or quiz will result in a grade of zero for that exam, and may result in further disciplinary action.

Each in term exam will be graded on the basis of 100 points; the final will count for 150 points. Exam grades will be curved by indexing scores to an appropriate level. See my web page for details. Note that a failure on the final exam will automatically lead to a grade no higher than D for the course. Failure in two of the three in-term exams will also result in a failing grade for the course.

Attendance:

Regular attendance is expected, and roll will be taken. If you are unavoidably absent due to a medical or personal emergency, you should notify the Assistant VP for Academic Affairs who will in turn notify me and your other instructors. I will not accept any excuse without such notification. After three unexcused absences, five percent will be deducted from the final grade for any further absence.

Accommodation for Students with Disabilities

If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact the Office of Health and Wellness, G-10 Student Union Building, 269-7119 to schedule an appointment as early as possible. That office will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for the course..