Course Syllabus

This is an introductory course in microeconomics covering the fundamental theories of the consumer, the firm, the market and the government in explaining how the economy works. It is a required course for any student wishing to major or minor in business or economics, and it is recommended for any student who would like to understand how the U.S. economy works.

There are different approaches to teaching. Some like to spoon-feed their students bite-sized portions which are easily digestible. I believe in setting goals that you can only reach on tiptoe. I do this because I believe that you will learn more if you are pushed, and because I believe that you should be aware of how much there is to learn. I fully believe that, if you pay attention, what you learn in this class will help you make more sense of business, politics, and world affairs in the future.

Student Learning Outcomes:

By the end of the semester, students should be able to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the methods and principles of microeconomic theory, including tradeoffs, opportunity costs, incentive effects, gains from exchange, and marginal decision making.
- Explain how markets work and how market prices are determined.
- Show mastery of the theories of demand, supply, consumption, production and cost, perfect competition, monopoly, and imperfect competition.
- Assess the impact of imperfect information, externalities, and public goods on efficiency and welfare, and evaluate possible public policy remedies.
- Use theory to analyze economic policy issues.
- Analyze social/human conditions by understanding how the interests of individuals both support and compete with the interests of groups such as firms, societies, and nations.
- Apply quantitative reasoning to understand and solve problems.
- Become critical consumers of information by explaining alternative perspectives and structuring hypotheses to evaluate evidence and distinguish between those alternatives.

Core Curriculum: This course meets the Social Science requirements of the University’s current Core Curriculum. In the new Silver Core starting Fall 2016, this course will satisfy CO6 (Cultures, Societies & Individuals): Students will learn how to systematically analyze human social conditions (e.g., individuals, groups, communities, and cultures). In particular, students will learn to observe, theorize, model, experiment, and/or interpret as a means of inquiring into human social relations. This course will also develop discipline-specific competency in both CO2 (Quantitative Reasoning) and CO3 (Critical Analysis & Use of Information).
**Online Homework:** This semester, I will assign half of you to use Aplia (http://aplia.com/), and the other half to Sapling Learning (https://www.saplinglearning.com/ibiscms/login/) for weekly online homework. This will be assigned at random, unless you have a strong preference for one or the other. Homework will count for 20% of your grade, and I will drop your lowest homework grade. I will also adjust homework scores to make sure the average grades are the same for both groups. Whichever homework results in better overall student performance will be the one I use in future semesters.

**Textbook:** *Microeconomics*, 3rd edition, by Paul Krugman & Robin Wells (2012). The textbook will be available for $90 as an e-book through either the Aplia or Sapling websites. If you choose to buy your textbook elsewhere, you will need to pay for a separate subscription for the online homework.

**Math Prerequisite and Competency:** The prerequisite for ECON 102 is completion of the Core Math requirement, an ACT of 22, an SAT of 500, or concurrent registration in MATH 126 or higher. Success in economics requires competency in basic math skills, and I will give a quiz using the online homework during the first week of class to check this. I will give you bonus points if you score 80% or more, and you may have one retry. If you do not score 60% or more on either of the two attempts, you must come see me in my office to pass the class.

**Course Website:** Grades, lecture notes, old exams, and similar information will be posted on Webcampus (http://wcl.unr.edu). You will also be subscribed to an e-mail list so I can more easily communicate with you, and if you have a spam feature you may need to explicitly allow email from me.

**Grading Scale:** Grades will be reported regularly on Webcampus according to a four point scale (4.0=A, 3.0=B, 2.0=C, 1.0=D, and 0.0=F) with one decimal place. Your course grade will be converted back into a letter grade, with +/-, at the end of the semester.

**Academic Integrity:** Students are expected to adhere to the ethical code as described in the UNR Student Handbook, and you commit to these principles by enrolling in this class. Academic dishonesty in any form is unacceptable, and penalties range from failing the exam or assignment to being dismissed from the university. We consider any violation of academic integrity to be a very serious matter.

**Examinations:** There will be two midterm exams and a comprehensive final exam, each worth 20% of your final grade. These will be taken in class, with no books or notes. Make-up exams require prior approval or very unusual circumstances, and a missed exam gets a grade of -1.0.

**Clickers:** In-class clicker use will count for 20% of your grade, and you get half-credit for wrong answers to reward participation and attendance. A Turning Technologies clicker can be purchased from the ASUN Bookstore, and you must register your device ID in Webcampus. After the first week I will excuse two absences, but more excused absences than that will require a signed letter from the university or your doctor. You can get some partial credit if you forget your clicker but attend anyway.

**Calculating the Course Grade:** There are five equally-weighted portions of your course grade: three exams, online homework, and clicker scores. As long as you pass all three exams, I will drop the portion with the lowest grade. This means that if you are very confident in the other grades you will earn, you may choose to either not do the online homework or not use a clicker. It is not recommended, however, since you may find the exams to be very challenging. There may also be some opportunities for bonus points, such as attending and reporting on special events, but these must be announced by the instructor in advance and available to all students.
Lecture Schedule:

Lectures will generally follow the order of the textbook, and you should prepare for class by reading the relevant textbook chapters. I include additional material when I think it appropriate. My PowerPoint lecture notes, in PDF format, will be posted afterw ards for your review on the course website. However, you may need to come to class to understand them.

I. Introduction to Economics:

Definitions, Principles, Methods, and Models; Specialization and Trade; Supply and Demand; Government Intervention and Unintended Consequences; Elasticity; Measuring Gains from Trade; Taxes; International Trade.

Read Krugman & Wells, chapters 1-8.

The First Midterm Exam is tentatively scheduled for Thursday, Feb. 26.

II. Markets with Perfect and Imperfect Competition:

Marginal Analysis and Rational Choice; Consumer Theory; Producer Theory; Perfect Competition; Monopoly, Oligopoly, and Monopolistic Competition.

Read Krugman & Wells, chapters 9-15.

The Second Midterm Exam is tentatively scheduled for Thursday, Apr. 9.

III. Microeconomics in an Imperfect World:

Efficiency and Equity; Externalities, Public Goods, Taxation, Social Insurance and Public Policy; Capital and Labor Markets; Uncertainty, Risk, Private Information and Technological Progress.

Read Krugman & Wells, chapters 16-20.

The Final Exam is scheduled by the Catalog for Thursday, May 7, 8:00 AM - 10:00 AM. This early time is set by the university. Approximately half of the final exam will cover Part III, and the other half will review Parts I and II.

Disability Accommodation: If you have a disability and require assistance, please contact the university’s Disability Resource Center as soon as possible to arrange for appropriate accommodations.

Audio and Video Recording: Unauthorized video or audio recordings of this class is prohibited by law and the Board of Regents. This class may be recorded only with the written permission of the instructor, and only for personal use. In order to accommodate students with disabilities, some students may have been given permission to record class lectures and discussions, and student comments during class may thus be recorded.

Course Evaluations: You will be asked to evaluate this course during the last two weeks of the semester using the university’s new system from CollegeNet WDYT, which you will be able to access from My Nevada. Just as I have an obligation to give you a grade that fairly reflects your performance in the class, you have an obligation to provide a fair and honest evaluation of my course. Don’t forget!

Teaching Assistant: If you are can’t come to my office hours or need additional assistance, this course has a Graduate Teaching Assistant, Steve Messinger. His contact information will be given out in class.