

EC 201 Introduction to Microeconomics Syllabus

Course Description

If you have any questions ask them in the [Introductory Microeconomics Chatspace](#).

The official description of the course is as follows:

A study of the choices individuals face as participants in the markets for goods, services and factors of production like labor; behavior of profit-maximizing firms operating in markets with varying degrees of competitive pressure; potential role of government in intervening to influence market outcomes using taxes and subsidies; reasons for international trade and economic inequality.

I intend to give you a basket of tools that you can use to understand the news better, your later economics courses, and some of the rapid changes happening around you.

Contact Information

This hybrid class has a lot of asynchronous work, and it is tough to find times for regular office hours that work for everyone. I encourage you to ask questions via [Google chat through your @pdx.edu account](#). It is built into your student account, and there are apps so you can use it on mobile. You can upload files, share screens, and it is all built into your student email account.

If you have a course-related question that does not include personal information you would not usually share in class, ask it in [Intro Microeconomics chat space](#). I or -- others -- will respond there or get back to you in a DM. I encourage others to help out.

I guarantee fast turnaround time and video available for my regular office hours:

- Tuesday 10-Noon.
- Wednesday Noon-2 pm

If you have something more personal that concerns the class, please DM me at woodsj@ in [chat](#).

Learning Material

All the textbooks and other class resources are free to the student. The videos, outlines, and exercises are all on Khan Academy through this [link](#). There is also a [creative commons licensed book](#) for those who would like access to a text and the media in Khan.

Khan Academy

Let's start with why I'm using Khan rather than one of the textbook bundles from one of the traditional publishers. The textbook providers were not adding enough value to warrant your expense. Second, the Khan Academy mastery system works.

Course Mastery System

There are additional pages in Canvas with a broader explanation of course mastery and links back to [Khan Academy on the Mastery](#). In the end, it comes back to adding up points, but you can earn points by watching videos, taking short four and five-question quizzes, and even more by taking longer quizzes on more topics at once. You can even take quizzes on the whole course at once. You can also lose small amounts of mastery points.

The points come in packets called "Skills." "Skills" are accumulated into "Units," and "Courses" are built up from "Units." "Familiarity" is usually achieved by watching all the videos.

"Familiarity", 70%, is critical. You will only be allowed to vote on or participate in the case discussion if you have "Familiarity" with all the skills within a unit. The point of the cases is to connect the theory to something real; if you are not familiar with the theory, there is nothing to connect to.

"Mastery" requires taking quizzes. You can take those quizzes as often as you like, but there are some limitations on how quickly you can take individual quizzes.

The overall goal is to achieve "Mastery", defined as 90% mastery points, in the course. Alternatively, you can aim for the more difficult "Mastery" of all the units.

Mastery of the course opens up the possibility of earning a B+ or an A.

Mastery of some but not all units opens up the possibility of lower grades and you need to master at least three of the six units to pass the class.

Your performance on the case preparation, discussion, and reflection determines the other part of your grade and how well you can connect the theory you learned in Khan Academy to the real world.

The Cases

There are between three and four cases attached to each Unit. They all illustrate concepts in that Unit and are outside the theoretical realm you see in a book. We need this. Students often study concepts like opportunity cost, take tests, and get good grades, yet do not recognize the same concept in front of their eyes hundreds of times a day.

It doesn't get real until it is connected to something real.

The day after our in-class meeting, I will put out a quiz poll in Canvas for which two cases you

would like to discuss at the next class. The choices will be for cases in our current Unit or one that was not chosen before. You can only vote if you are “Familiar” with the Unit. You can usually satisfy familiarity by watching a video in that skill.

Your vote is a commitment to if either of your choices wins the vote:

- Turn in a preparation assignment by 8 pm the evening before our in-class session.
- Attend class and meaningfully participate in both case discussions.

Anyone familiar with all the skills by 8 a.m. two days before can also turn in the preparation assignment by 10 p.m. that day. Please note that the due date is one day earlier than those that voted. There is more time to get familiar but less before the preparation assignment is due.

Turning in the preparatory assignment is a commitment to attend the in-class discussion session. If there are fewer than four responses to both cases, the class will be canceled because no one is prepared to discuss the topic. Each time you turn in a preparatory assignment but don’t attend, the number of passed cases required for each letter grade increases by one. There is a real cost to committing to attending class and then not attending.

In-class Discussions

After you turn in your case preparation assignment, you are committed to attending class and participating in the case discussion.

When we arrive in class, we will break up into groups of between three and five students, depending on how many people are there to discuss the case. Each group will be given a Google doc which will be used by the group’s scribe. The doc will contain some initial probe questions. It is up to your group to answer the questions and expand on them. The best answers are often additional questions, which you then answer. The goal is to use the concepts and language you learn in class to understand the cases.

I will be joining in the discussion and bouncing between groups. If there is only one group, we will spend a full hour on discussion and refining our thoughts in the Google doc. If there is more than one group, we will come together to share what the groups came up with and check in on differences and similarities.

The case discussion concludes with a self-evaluation of who was the best and worst contributor in your group, what you will do differently to prepare for a case next time, something that the case discussion added to your understanding.

After a short break, we will return for the second case of the meeting.

I will assign a grade based on your classmates’ assessment and this rubric. Keep in mind that just showing up does not guarantee passing the case discussion.

Basis for Grade

There are six units in Khan Academy. The Course has an overall 90% mastery level, as does each of the six units in the course. The table below shows the minimum number of units you must master and the minimum number of in-class case discussions you will need for each letter grade. You need to meet both minimums to earn that letter grade.

Letter Grade	Minimum Unit Mastery	Minimum Passing Case Discussions
A	6/6 Units or 90% Course Mastery	5
B+	5/6 Units or 90% Course Mastery	4
B	4/6 Units	3
C/Pass	3/6 Units	2
NP	n/a	0

To earn an A in the course, you will need Mastery in all six units, or 90% course mastery, and have a passing evaluation on five case discussions. If this student only had passing scores in 3 case discussions, this student would earn a B in the course since they have only three passed discussions even though they have more than three units mastered. Remember that turning in the case preparation is a commitment to attending class. If you choose not to attend after turning in the case preparation, the minimum number of passed case discussions for each letter grade increases by one.

There will be two case discussions a week, a total of 20. Passing case discussions requires more than just showing up. We will be evaluating how well you use course concepts in real-world applications. Each Unit has three to four cases that we will discuss. I encourage you to choose your top 5 and then five more, each a little earlier in the course than your top five.

Recommended Workflow

This is based on my playthrough of the course and worked well for me. The course provides many ways to earn mastery points that trade-off between watching videos and completing practice quizzes, unit quizzes, and course quizzes with varying degrees of effort and time requirements. The right way to address the material depends on your time and attention constraints. That can change daily, and your approach should adapt as well.

- If you have taken a similar course before, take the course challenge. It takes about half an hour and will let the system know what you do and don't know. This is the equivalent of taking the final exam for the course. This can earn you familiarity and Mastery of many skills at once.
 - The course challenge is high risk, high reward. You can earn many mastery points, but you can also lose Mastery in skills.

- It is a 30-minute time commitment.
- I stopped using it after I had Mastery in the first Unit because of the risk of losing Mastery in some skills.
- Go to the first Unit. You should see a skill summary on the left and videos and quizzes on the right.
 - Earn mastery points by watching videos and taking quizzes.
 - Watching videos helps learn the material and is a low-risk way of earning mastery points.
 - Taking practice quizzes is a higher risk, potentially earning mastery points and increasing Mastery in specific skills, but you can lose some mastery points in the covered skills.
 - The numbered Unit quizzes and Unit Tests cover more skills than the practice quizzes and increase the potential risk and reward.
 - Look for “Try again” and “Up next for you” for recommendations on what to work on next. The system will even recommend videos.

Your approach depends on what kind of person you are and how much you like watching videos. I read with intention and learn very quickly. I find videos slow going and frustrating. Watching videos is a quick, safe way of gaining “familiarity,” but you need to take the practice and unit quizzes and unit tests to earn “mastery.”

Here is what I would do if I was taking this course for the first time and had little background on the material.

- Take the course challenge to find out what I already know. This could be an ego blow, but I usually know something. If I’m sure I don’t know much, I’ll skip this step and save half an hour.
- Get “Familiar” with all the skills in the Unit.
 - If you like watching videos watch them for the first skill, then the second, and so on.
 - That will give you “Familiarity” with each skill and allow you to participate in the case discussions.
 - If you dislike videos, skip them until later and start taking practice quizzes, which have built-in help and are only four questions long. You can earn “Familiarity” this way too.
 - Get “Familiar” with each skill in the Unit as quickly as possible to participate in the in-class discussions.
- Follow the blue button to get “Mastery” in the Unit
 - The “Up next for you” and blue “Start” buttons are safe next actions.
 - You can also bounce around the Unit based on your preferences, but there are limits. You can’t earn additional mastery points from a skill you have already mastered.
 - “Mastery” in a skill requires taking the associated unit quiz

- “Mastery” in a unit requires taking the unit test and the Unit quizzes.
- Once you have “Mastered” a unit, stop taking quizzes in that Unit. You are done with that Unit and can start on the next.

Don’t slow down. Remember voting on cases and participating in the case discussions requires you to be “Familiar” with every task in the Unit. There are no make-up cases to discuss.

If you are “Familiar” with every skill in a unit, you can vote on the two cases we will discuss at our next in-person session. You don’t have to vote, but if you do and one of the cases you voted for will be discussed; you are committed to turning in the case preparation for both topics and attending class to discuss the cases.

Case Preparation

Case preparation can take some time. We are annotating short articles or podcasts using the Hypothesis social annotation tool. You can find guidance on how to approach this exercise and the rubric [here](#).

- Read the case summary.
- Listen to any media contained in the case.
- Start an [academic skim](#) of the case material.
- Look for outside references on this topic and comment using Hypothesis

A Few Words

My job is to help you learn. I set the bounds on what you should be learning, create the drills, give feedback, and help you get what you need out of the course for future classes and life.

Nothing I do will help you learn unless you believe you can and want to learn. I can’t push on a string.

For many of you, the most challenging part of the course is the math you need to understand before you take the course. It would be best if you had Freshman High School Algebra. If you need more work, go to [Khan Academy](#) and get where you have to go.

The second thing I need you to do is develop a habit of learning a little bit every day. Set aside time daily to work on the class, and it goes quickly.

My last piece of advice is to expand on the tools you use to learn. The new generations of large language models like GPT-3.5/4 can almost, and I mean almost, provide on-demand tutoring, but you need to be clear that you are asking for help learning and not asking for the answer. I will provide some prototype tools in Canvas that are trained on tutoring patterns and the course material. Remember that not everything it says will be right or perfect, but it is pretty good.

Incomplete Policy and Agreement

The use and abuse of incomplete grades have really taken off in the last few years. The abuse of faculty by students to grant incompletes has also increased. Rather than negotiate incomplete contracts individually near the end of the term, we will use this standard incomplete contract.

The student will have one year to complete this specification-graded course. The student must have a minimum of three units “Mastered” to be able to request an incomplete. This is PSU policy and not negotiable.

The student will continue to have access to the Khan Academy course.

Students that still need to complete case discussions will complete those tasks in later terms participating in discussions with students enrolled in those later terms. The student will email the faculty by the end of the second week of class to give them audit/incomplete access to Canvas so that they can complete the case preparation assignments.

All schedule conflicts are the responsibility of the student. All the rules about voting on cases and the penalties for not attending class after turning in a case preparation assignment still apply.

The student will email me when they have completed their incomplete and want their grade submitted. The grading standards will remain unchanged. Please be aware that incomplete grades convert to an F after one year.

Policy Statements from the University

- **Generative AI:** Tools are Generally Allowed with Attribution: In this course, those students who wish to utilize Generative AI tools, such as ChatGPT, are encouraged to do so. AI tools may be employed to brainstorm assignments or projects or to refine pre-existing work. However, to uphold scholarly standards, students are required to cite any AI-generated material that contributes to their work, including in-text citations, quotations, and references. The generation of content through AI without appropriate attribution constitutes academic misconduct.
- **Academic Integrity:** Academic integrity is a vital part of the educational experience at PSU. Please see the PSU Student Code of Conduct for the university’s policy on academic dishonesty. A confirmed violation of that Code in this course may result in failure of the course.
- **Incomplete Policy:** Students do not have a right to receive or demand an Incomplete grade. The option of assigning an Incomplete grade is at the discretion of the instructor when the following criteria are met. Eligibility Criteria:
 - Required satisfactory course completion/participation.

- Reasonable justification for the request.
 - Incomplete grade is not a substitute for a poor grade.
 - Written agreement. (See Incomplete Contract)
 - Resolving the Incomplete.
- **Student Services Disability Access Statement:** If you have, or think you may have, a disability that may affect your work in this class and feel you need accommodations, contact the Disability Resource Center to schedule an appointment and initiate a conversation about reasonable accommodations. The [DRC](#) is located in 116 Smith Memorial Student Union, 503-725-4150, <https://www.pdx.edu/disability-resource-center/>.
 - **Safe Campus Statement:** Portland State University desires to create a safe campus for our students. As part of that mission, PSU requires all students to take the learning module entitled Creating a Safe Campus: Preventing Gender Discrimination, Sexual Harassment, Sexual Misconduct and Sexual Assault. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you can find the appropriate resources on PSU's [Enrollment Management & Student Affairs: Sexual Prevention & Response website](#).
 - **Student Food Security:** Any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or who lacks a safe and stable place to live, and believes this may affect their performance in the course, is urged to contact Committee for Improving Student Food Security for support at foodhelp@pdx.edu. Furthermore, please notify the professor if you are comfortable in doing so. This will enable her to provide any resources that she may possess.
 - **Title IX Reporting:** As an instructor, students frequently come to me for assistance in matters that are not related to the course material. Please be aware that PSU's policies require instructors to report any instance of sexual harassment, sexual and relationship violence and/or other forms of prohibited discrimination to University Officials, who keep the information private. If you would rather share information about these experiences with a PSU staff member who does not have these reporting responsibilities and can keep the information confidential, please contact one of the following campus resources.
 - Confidential Advocates: 503.894.7982, or by scheduling online (for matters regarding sexual harassment and sexual and relationship violence)
 - Center for Student Health and Counseling (SHAC): 1880 SW 6th Ave, 503.725.2800
 - Student Legal Services: 1825 SW Broadway, (SMSU) M343, 503.725.4556 For more information, please complete the required student module Understanding Sexual Misconduct and Resources in D2L. PSU Sexual Misconduct Response website gives you comprehensive information about how to support and/or report an incident. Please complete the required student module Understanding

Sexual Misconduct and Resources, which provides information about PSU policy and resources.

- **Cultural Resource Centers:** The Cultural Resource Centers (CRCs) create a student-centered inclusive environment that enriches the university experience. We honor diversity, explore social justice issues, celebrate cultural traditions, and foster student identities, success, and leadership. Our centers include the Multicultural Student Center, La Casa Latina Student Center, Native American Student & Community Center, Pan African Commons, Pacific Islander, Asian, Asian American Student Center and the Middle Eastern, North African, South Asian program. We provide student leadership, employment, and volunteer opportunities; student resources such as computer labs, event, lounge and study spaces; and extensive programming. All are welcome!
- **Recording Technology Notice:** We will use technology for virtual meetings and recordings in this course. Our use of such technology is governed by FERPA, the Acceptable Use Policy and PSU's Student Code of Conduct. A record of all meetings and recordings is kept and stored by PSU, in accordance with the Acceptable Use Policy and FERPA. Your instructor will not share recordings of your class activities outside of course participants, which include your fellow students, TAs/GAs/Mentors, and any guest faculty or community-based learning partners that we may engage with. You may not share recordings outside of this course. Doing so may result in disciplinary action.
- **Turnitin:** Students agree that by taking this course all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. Use of Turnitin.com page service is subject to the Usage Policy and Privacy Pledge posted on the Turnitin.com site.