



Department of Economics, University of Southern California

ECON 303 26082R INTERMEDIATE MICROECONOMIC THEORY

UNITS: 4 Fall 2025

LOCATION / TIME: **Monday/Wednesday 2-3.20pm at GFS 118**

INSTRUCTOR: Yilmaz Kocer kocer@usc.edu, office: KAP 118

OFFICE HOURS: I will be available in my office KAP 118 and on [zoom](#) 6-7.30pm on Mondays and **only on [zoom](#) 11.30am-1.30pm Thursdays**. I will announce many extra office hours as demand arises throughout the semester. If you can't make them or if you have a short question, email me to arrange another time to meet over zoom or in person.

TEACHING ASSISTANT: Your TA and grader Aruj Shukla aruishuk@usc.edu will hold regular office hours during (TBD) every week for content and grading related questions. Please email all your grading related questions directly to Aruj, and I will only hear grading related questions from him first. Separate from office hours, he will also hold weekly dedicated discussion sessions over zoom (date TBD) where he will cover practice problems to prepare you for the exams and homeworks. You are expected to follow these zoom sessions diligently as this is the place where hundreds of questions similar to the problem sets and exams and past years' exam questions will be solved. He will post his weekly office hours and the weekly zoom discussion session hours very soon.

Communication: I will respond to emails most probably within hours (will not exceed 24 hours almost surely) and will be more vigilant on being prompt with my replies closer to exams or assignment deadlines to be of immediate help. Please use "ECON 303" in the subject line in your emails for me to respond faster.

Course BRIGHTSPACE Website: All course materials; instructions, announcements, discussion/feedback, exams, problem sets, sample exams, in class exercise problems, answer keys, your grades etc. will be posted on *Brightspace* (hereafter "BS"). I already put under the *contents* tab the **solution manual** for the end of chapter problems for your textbook, all in a single pdf file. Familiarize yourself with the announcements, contents and assignments and grades tabs.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOK: **Besanko, David and Ronald R. Braeutigam, Microeconomics, 5th Edition, Wiley Inc.** You can buy a used 5th edition, or buy a 6th edition (minor changes in 3-4 pages over the whole book in the 6th edition; I will use the 5th ed; so you can buy the cheaper 5th edition too). I checked each and every end-of-chapter problem in the 5th and 6th editions manually and for all the problems we'll be dealing with, or you'll possibly be practicing with, 5th ed solution manual is identical in numbering and content with the 6th edition; so you can go ahead and buy the 5th ed textbook. I strongly suggest you buy a print copy, as it is an excellent book you can proudly keep in your library for life, or rent the e-text relatively cheaply [here](#).

Students with the USC Digital Course Materials Program (provided by the company Follett) should have direct access to the etext under Brightspace course page; any access or redemption code necessary should be available there or in an email to you from the USC bookstore. Please follow course announcements on Brightspace for any clarifications.

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course provides a rigorous foundation for microeconomic theory, anchoring what you have learned in the microeconomics principles class on a sound technical mathematical basis. It will give you analytical tools that will be fundamental in most upper-level classes in Economics, Finance and/or Accounting. We will first study the behavior of individual consumers and firms, how they decide under conditions of scarcity and uncertainty. We will analyze how firms minimize costs and maximize profits and compete against others in a perfectly competitive market. We will also look at situations in which the firm is a monopolist or competes with a limited number of rivals. Some of the key concepts we will introduce include economic incentives, marginal analysis, opportunity cost, market efficiency -whether a market is functioning well- and strategic behavior (how to predict and respond to your rivals' decisions). If we have time we will also study a curated subset of market failures; adverse selection, public goods, externalities where markets may fail to deliver efficient outcomes.

PRE-REQUISITES: Econ 203 and some calculus; MATH 118 or MATH 125. Problem solving and quantitative reasoning are key components of the course. Together with ordinary arithmetic and pre-calculus, you will need a small bit of calculus to do the work in this course. You need to be able to;

1) Solve one variable (x) linear and quadratic equations, plot the corresponding line or parabola as a graph, derive a line's slope, intercepts, find the peak/dip of a quadratic, its roots, and solve inequalities involving a quadratic function of x .

2) Solve two linear equations in two variables (x,y).

3) Calculate the derivative of polynomials of one variable (like the derivative of " x^3-2x^2+3x-5 ") and logarithms (as in the derivative of $\ln(x)$ being $1/x$), and employ the product rule and chain rule if there are compound terms (as in the derivative of $\ln(x^2+3)$ being equal to $2x/(x^2+3)$)

I will go over all we need (the items above and any extras) in a brief math review.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: At the successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

-- Solve the consumer's utility maximization problem to derive demand.

-- Solve the firm's cost minimization problem to derive input demands and calculate the cost function.

-- Use the cost function to solve the perfectly competitive firm's profit maximization problem and derive supply.

-- Evaluate the impacts of changes in exogenous variables on the optimal behavior of consumers and firms and the resulting impacts on utility and profits.

-- Assess and quantify the impacts of public policies on competitive market equilibrium.

-- Solve the monopolist's profit maximization problem and calculate the optimal price and quantity.

-- Solve for the equilibrium quantity and price in an oligopolistic market, where firms are competing in prices (Bertrand) or in quantity (Cournot)

--Evaluate the implications of departures from perfect competition, such as monopolies or imperfect competition.

Class Participation

Even though it is not directly part of your grade, your attendance and active presence in class is essential. Stay engaged, ask questions if anything is unclear, suggest answers to questions I pose, read the textbook and practice with the end of chapter problems (particularly the ones I recommend on Brightspace announcements). The

course material is dense, loaded with many ideas, concepts, problems and exercises, so a casual interest and less-than-full commitment will not suffice to be successful in this course. Also, many hints about the assignments, exams will be given during the classes so attending classes is very important.

GRADING CRITERIA: All graded elements in this course will be in the format of technical problems, similar in structure to the end of chapter problems in your textbook, or in class exercises. No multiple-choice questions or questions about definitions/terms throughout the course. Of course, I may ask you to comment and interpret your answers to the problems from an economic perspective.

Grading component	%weight
Midterm Exam October 13th Monday	25%
8-9 Problem Sets due dates TBA (worst 2 omitted)	38%
FINAL EXAM December 12th Friday 2-4pm, IN CLASS	37%
OPTIONAL EXTRA CREDIT opportunity for successful JEP involvement	+3% increase in your <i>weighted cumulative grade</i> .

Your **letter grade** depends on your *cumulative weighted average* grade x according to the following table:

	≥ 90	≥ 85	≥ 80	≥ 75	≥ 70	≥ 65	≥ 60	≥ 55	≥ 50	≥ 45	≥ 40	< 40
grade	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	F

$x = 0.26 \times \text{Midterm exam grade} + 0.39 \times \text{Final exam grade} + 0.35 \times \text{average homework grade (after your worst 2 are dropped)} + 3$ (if you successfully complete the JEP program) where all grades are over 100pts.

For example, if your $x = 73.45$ you end up with (at least) a **B- grade**. I will also consider your weighted average's relative ranking within the class, only to improve your grades beyond the minimum guarantees described above.

The Midterm Exam and the Final Exam

The dates are already set as above and they will be in delivered in person in class. No books/notes/cell phones are allowed but calculators are okay, even though I don't think you'll need it. The final exam is cumulative ; it covers all material studied throughout the semester; however it will predominantly (around %80) test the second half of the course (material covered after the midterm exam), to give equal grading coverage to all topics. The final exam is around 50% longer than the midterm exam both in size and in time duration.

Problem SETS 8-9 problem sets will be assigned throughout the semester, roughly one per 1-2 chapters of textbook content (one for every 1-2 weeks) and the **best 7-8** will count towards your grade (your worst 2 will be dropped!). I will announce the due dates for the problem sets both in class and on *Brightspace* and you will at least have 5 days to complete it. You may work together on problem sets and form study groups; however, you must each write down your own answers and submit them individually; and be prepared to present them during class if called upon. They will be posted on BS under assignments tab, and you are required to submit your work back on BS as a **single legible pdf file**; no hand delivery of problem sets to me or to your TA in person. Late PS

submissions will unfortunately get 0 points, as I will post the answer key right after its deadline.

MISSING an EXAM or a PROBLEM SET:

You will get a **0 score** for a problem set, midterm exam or the final exam if you miss it, except in the case of USC registrar's definition of an emergency (See [USC Grading and Correction of Grades Handbook](#)) which includes documented medical and family emergencies characterized by severe and unforeseen hardship. According to USC guidelines, "no student is permitted to omit the [final examination]." Per the guidelines, in case of "a documented illness or other [event that meets the registrar's definition of emergency] occurring after the withdrawal deadline for the course," an incomplete grade (IN) will be assigned. Thus, if you miss the final exam for a reason that meets the USC registrar's definition of emergency, you will be assigned an incomplete grade IN for the course.

If you miss a midterm exam for a valid reason as described above, its weight will be pushed towards the final exam. In this case, you should provide me with the proofs of the medical or family emergencies.

Having another midterm or final exam on the same day is not an excuse for not taking it. If you ever have a conflict with an exam date/time, see me as soon as you are aware of it (it must be at least two weeks in advance). There is no makeup exam for the midterm, the final exam, or the problem sets!

Missing a problem set is less problematic, for both you are having many days to complete it and "**dropping your worst 2 problem sets**" from your grade is expressly designed to buffer against unforeseen hardships and illnesses and family emergencies. If you miss 3 or more problem sets, I will ask you to document your excuse for all missed problem sets to show they meet the registrar's emergency criterion (in which case I excuse you from); otherwise, you will get 0 credits for all missed problem sets. **Please do not email me about your emergencies/sickness about a missing homework, unless it is the 3rd one missing; in which case send me all documents proving the emergency separately in all 3 missing problem sets.** Even though your worst 2 is omitted, I urge you to complete and submit each one of them if you possibly can; to start working on them as early as they are posted on bs. **Late PS submissions will receive NO credit** as I will post the answers on Brightspace right at the deadline, so **please submit whatever you have by the deadline to get any credit and please do not email me for an extension.**

IMPORTANT REMINDERS

- 1) Your cumulative weighted average will not be rounded up.
- 2) All exams will be delivered in class, no exam taking over zoom under any condition.
- 3) Students with OSAS accommodations should reach out to me as soon as they get the paperwork, as I cannot accommodate them without the paperwork or retroactively. They should also arrange, in advance, to take the exams in the OSAS office.
- 4) Please ask all grading related questions, emails directly to your TA first. You have two weeks after the announcement of grades for an exam or problem set to voice your concerns about any incorrect grading or missing grades; after that time, the grades for that exam/problem set are fixed and cannot be modified. After meeting with your TA, if you still feel your work was graded incorrectly, please submit your work and a brief written explanation of your argument. I will regrade the entire answer, which means that your score may go down.

- 5) I will assume you have a commitment to academic integrity as per [the student handbook](#) or the [Office of Academic Integrity's website](#).
- 6) Please refrain from cell phone or laptop use during class, unless you are using your tablet/laptop solely for note taking purposes, which you should let me know at the beginning of the course.
- 7) As this course is highly technical/quantitative yet does not have dedicated discussion sessions to practice with problems; it is imperative for you to practice with as many problems as possible yourself.
- 8) You will see your graded midterm exams and final exams (and take pics) in your TA's dedicated office hours, but after the office hour for the final exam grades, the ball is completely off your court and there is no opportunity for you to make a special case to me about your grades or circumstances nor is there any office hours until after letter grades are submitted. If you still have questions about the letter grading, please drop by on the first week of the following Spring semester and I will answer them.
- 9) There will be no opportunities for extra credit (other than JEP opportunity) in this course.
- 10) Even though attendance to Aruj's weekly zoom discussion sessions is not directly a part of your grade, it might be the most important part of this course as you will be practicing with many problems similar to the problem sets or exams and will be covering past exams' questions.

How to do well in this course: Listen to the lectures carefully and read the relevant sections from your book beforehand. Practice with problems; AS MANY AS YOU CAN! Go over the in-class exercises, problem sets and textbook end of chapter problems (especially the subset that I will recommend on Brightspace announcements) very carefully. Make sure to attend Aruj's weekly zoom discussion sessions to practice with many problems to be ready for the exams. Make sure to understand why we solve particular equations in some particular order, rather than just verifying the algebra. Work with your friends on the difficult problems. Learn from each other. Seek help from Aruj and myself; we are here to help you. Check BS announcements for free econ tutoring services by the ECON department. Your textbook is an excellent textbook, dense and comprehensive with numerous end of chapter problems for practice.

TOPICS AND TENTATIVE OUTLINE

Week	Dates	Topic	Besanko
1	Aug 25, 27	Introduction, Demand and Supply Analysis - Overview PS1	Ch.1, Ch.2
2	Sep 3	Math Review, Consumer preferences	A1-A8, Ch.3
3	Sep 8, 10	Consumer preferences, Consumer Choice PS2	Ch.3
4	Sep 15, 17	Consumer Choice, Special Utility Functions	Ch.4
5	Sep 22, 24	Consumer Demand, PS3	Ch.4, Ch.5
6	Sep 29, Oct 1	Bulk sales, Coupons, Vouchers	Ch.5
7	Oct 6, 8	Consumer demand, Substitution Income effects, Review PS4	Ch.5
8	Oct 13, 15	Midterm Exam , Firm's cost curves	parts of Ch 6,7,8
9	Oct 20, 22	Perfect competition, competitive market applications PS5	Ch.9, Ch.10

10	Oct 27, 29	Competitive markets, monopoly PS6	Ch.10, Ch.11
11	Nov 3, 5	Monopoly	Ch.11
12	Nov 10, 12	Market structure and competition, oligopoly PS7	Ch.13
13	Nov 17, 19	Oligopoly models	Ch.13
14	Nov 24	Oligopoly models PS8	Ch. 13
15	Dec 1, 3	Game Theory and strategic behavior, Risk, Expected Utility, Insurance PS9	Ch.14, parts of Ch.15
FINAL EXAM in class, December 12th Friday 2-4pm, IN CLASS			

Support Systems:

Counseling and Mental Health — (213) 740-9355 — 24/7 on call

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline — 988 for both calls and text messages — 24/7 on call the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (formerly known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline) provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across the United States. You can also call (800) 273-8255

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) — (213) 740-9355(WELL)— 24/7 on call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender- and power-based harm (including sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking).

Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX (EEO-TIX) — (213) 740-5086 Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment — (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

The Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) — (213) 740-0776

OSAS ensures equal access for students with disabilities through providing academic accommodations and auxiliary aids in accordance with federal laws and university policy.

USC Campus Support and Intervention — (213) 740-0411 Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion — (213) 740-2101

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

USC Emergency — UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 — 24/7 on call

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

USC Department of Public Safety — UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-1200 — 24/7 on call For non-emergency assistance or information.

Office of the Ombuds — (213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323) 442-0382 (HSC) A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concern.

Occupational Therapy Faculty Practice — (323) 442-2850 or otfp@med.usc.edu Confidential Lifestyle Redesign services for USC students to support health promoting habits and routines that enhance quality of life and academic performance.