

EC 110 Principles of Economics

Seminar Leader: Martin Binder (section B) and Marcus Giamattei (section A)

Course Times: Mondays and Wednesdays, 15:45-17:15

Email: m.giamattei@berlin.bard.edu, m.binder@berlin.bard.edu, office hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 17:30-18:30 (Martin) and Wednesdays 13-15:30 and on appointment (Marcus)

Course Description

This course is an introduction to the essential ideas of economic analysis. It elaborates the basic model of consumer and firm behaviour, including demand and supply, in the context of an idealized competitive market, and examines several ways in which the real world deviates from this model, including monopoly, minimum wages and other price controls, taxes, and government regulation. The assumptions concerning human behaviour that underlie economics are presented and critiqued. The module is also concerned with the aggregate behaviour of modern economies: growth and measurement of the economy, unemployment, interest rates, inflation, government spending and its impact, and international trade. Part of the module focuses on the government tools used to influence economic growth and individuals' behaviour.

Learning outcomes

- Mastery of fundamental concepts of economic analysis
- Understanding of the economic method and its application to the explanation of human behaviour
- Basic knowledge and understanding of the overall functioning of modern economies
- Ability to recognize and understand the ways in which real-world economic activity and behaviour deviates from the models and patterns used in the discipline of economics
- Capacity to analyse and critique the assumptions concerning behaviour that are at the basis of economic analysis

Requirements

Textbooks

For this course, we will use the textbook “Economics” by Mankiw/Taylor (4th edition; you can also buy the 3rd rev. ed. as imperfect substitute) and required readings will mostly be from this book (other editions of the book “Principles of Economics” by Mankiw may be used as even less perfect substitutes). Additional reading may be provided during the course.

Attendance

Attendance at all classes is a crucial part of the education offered by Bard College Berlin and therefore mandatory. Students may be excused if circumstances outside of their control prevent their attendance (e.g. illness, appointment with a government office). These cases are excused if notification is given via email before the course. The instructor may require additional documentation in case of frequent absences during exams/quizzes.

Bard College Berlin does not offer credit for any course in which a student has missed more than 30% of classes, regardless of the reasons for the absences, whether excused or unexcused.

The full Bard College Berlin attendance policy can be found in the Student Handbook, Section 2.8.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR FALL 2020: Some students might need to begin the semester remotely due to travel restrictions caused by the pandemic. **In addition, all students and instructors must refrain from in-person attendance if they are feeling ill.**

Assessment

Assessment will be based on attendance, preparation for classes, regular and active participation, professionalism (see below), quizzes, exercises as well as a midterm (60 minutes) and final examination (90 minutes). The two worst-graded quizzes or exercises will not count towards the grade.

Exercise Deadlines

Exercises are due before class one week after being given. Those exercises will be given throughout the course where appropriate and constitute an integral part of the final grade.

Policy on Late Submission of Exercises

Exercises that are up to 24 hours late will be downgraded one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). After that, we will accept late submissions only until the end of the week in which they were due (Sun, 23:59), but these cannot receive a grade of higher than C. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment.

Grade Breakdown

Seminar preparation, professionalism and participation 20%

Quizzes and exercises 20%

Midterm examination 30%

Final examination 30%

Schedule

Fall classes start on Monday, August 31 and run until Friday, December 11 with fall break planned from October 19 – October 25. Completion week is from December 14 - 18. Students are required to be on campus during completion week.

	Topic	Reading (Ch = Mankiw)
Week 1	Introduction - The principles of economics	Ch 1
Week 2	Principles continued	Ch 1
Week 3	How economists think	Ch 2
Week 4	How markets work I: Supply and demand	Ch 3
Week 5	How markets work II: Markets and Welfare	Ch 7
Week 6	How markets work III: Taxes and price controls	Ch 8
Week 7	Taxes and price controls continued	Ch 8

	<i>Midterm exam tba during class hours</i>	
	Fall break	
Week 8	The economics of the public sector	Ch10
Week 9	The economics of the public sector continued	Ch 10/11
Week 10	Climate change and public policies	Ch 11
Week 11	Inequality	Ch 18
Week 12	Gains from trade	Ch 19
Week 13	Introduction to macroeconomics	Ch 20
Week 14	Introduction to macroeconomics, continued Review	Ch 21
Week 15 Completion week	FINAL EXAMINATION: tba	

Classes missed due to federal holidays will not be rescheduled.

Professionalism

Being a student is your full-time job and with it come a set of responsibilities and expectations, as with any other job. Maintaining a professional attitude towards your course of study is something that also prepares you for later work life. A professional attitude towards your studies is shown by coming to class on time, being prepared, being courteous to your teachers and fellow students. It is exhibited by writing your essays with care, actively participating in class, avoiding distractions (excessive bathroom breaks, using smartphones to check on irrelevant issues during class etc.), not missing classes except for the most dire of circumstances and in general by adapting to the rules of the course without trying to bargain for personal exceptions.

Ethics/Academic honesty

A core value of the academy is truth and the pursuit thereof. Nothing can shake the foundations of this pursuit as much as academic dishonesty as it undermines the trust that is indispensable to it. This is why I will not excuse any instance of academic dishonesty. Plagiarism, cheating during exams, copying homework assignments (or doing individual assignments with a classmate) all constitute violations of academic honesty and of the clause on “academic integrity” that each student has signed in the student handbook. They can lead to failing the course and will be reflected in the student’s record (having a record of academic dishonesty can make obtaining scholarships, achieving a study abroad place or admission to another program difficult if not outright impossible). If students fail to meet the expected standards of academic integrity, this will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section III Academic Misconduct.

(version: 10.08.2020)