

ECN201: Summer Session I 2021  
University of Rhode Island

ECN201: PRINCIPLES OF ECONOMICS – MICROECONOMICS  
Summer Session I  
May 24<sup>th</sup> to June 25<sup>th</sup>, 2021

Instructor: Dr. Smita Ramnarain  
Classroom: Online  
Course Website: Brightspace  
Online Office Hours: M-Th 2 – 3 pm and also by request/appointment!  
Online Office: [Zoom Personal Room](#)  
Email: [sramnarain@uri.edu](mailto:sramnarain@uri.edu)

### **COURSE OVERVIEW**

This course is an introductory course in microeconomics, i.e. the branch of economics that studies the behavior of economic agents such as firms, households, or the government. We begin with a brief foray into the history of economic thought in order to contextualize the emergence of neoclassical microeconomic theories. The aim of this course is not only to familiarize you with basic theories and tools of analysis used by economists and policy-makers, but also to examine these theories and tools critically. We will cover the basics of neoclassical microeconomic theory, i.e. topics such as supply and demand analysis, consumer/utility theory, profit maximization by firms, structure of markets, market failures, and the role of the government. Throughout the course, we will learn some applications of neoclassical microeconomic theory by looking into real-world examples, case studies, and some actual data. We will also introspect on some of the assumptions and limitations of neoclassical theory in the context of unfolding real-world events.

### **COURSE GOALS**

This course is designed to familiarize you with basic economic structures and processes: what markets are, how they work, when they might fail, how economic entities might make decisions, and how policies might play a role in bettering economic outcomes. Application and critical thinking are the two crucial aspects of this course, and central components of any major or career. In particular, you will be able to:

- Understand fundamental microeconomics concepts and vocabulary such as opportunity costs, demand, supply, elasticity, competition, externalities, equity, and efficiency.
- Apply fundamental economic concepts to the analysis of market and non-market outcomes.
- Critically think about an economic problem using reasoning, data, and theory, and about the economic framework itself.

This course meets general education outcome **A2: SOCIAL & BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES**.

### **COURSE MODALITIES**

The course is **online and asynchronous** but not self-paced. What does asynchronous mean? It means that you can choose to work on the materials whenever you prefer on any given day, but you must do so within the time constraints and assignment/discussion

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post due dates that are set up. That is, there are set deadlines each week for different things.

The course material is divided into five weeks (modules). Each week's material is divided into multiple topics, typically covering 2-3 chapters per week. The week begins on a Tuesday, and ends Monday nights. Your discussion post should typically be up by Thursday night, and responses to others' posts by Sunday night. Problem sets are typically due Monday nights. **Please make sure you have a list of topics, due dates, and important assignments printed out from the syllabus!**

Each module (week) will have a to-do list with topics and concepts we will cover that week. There will be three to five topics per week, so you have some work for each day. Each topic contains the learning objectives, assigned readings, videos, and links to other important content on the internet, quizzes etc.

For each topic, you will typically have to:

- Read assigned portions of the free online text.
- Watch short videos on key concepts and take notes as you might do in class.
- Work on sample problems on worksheets.
- Take a short multiple choice quiz at the end. These are practice for exams.

For each module (i.e. weekly), you will have to:

- Participate in a discussion on Brightspace on a given prompt.
- Complete an online problem set on Sapling (paid: \$42).

In addition to quizzes, weekly discussions, and problem sets, there will be a midterm exam and a final exam for the course.

### **COURSE MATERIALS**

- Free online textbook: OpenStax Microeconomics (free e-book). I will post the sections of this textbook that you should read for each topic within a module.
- Online access to Sapling Learning (\$42: see last page for instructions). See textbox below.
- All other readings and materials will be posted on Brightspace.

### **TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS**

This is an online course. A computer with reliable access to the internet is required in order to successfully navigate this course.

The course is available on URI's learning management system, **Brightspace**.

<https://web.uri.edu/brightspace/>. To access Brightspace, you will first need to reset your password to single sign-on (if you have not done this already). Single sign-on consolidates all your URI passwords except eCampus to just one single password. Please see the link above and then follow instructions to access the course website. Brightspace help is available under the Help tab (once you sign in). You can also call the URI Helpdesk at 401-874-4357 or email them at [helpdesk@uri.edu](mailto:helpdesk@uri.edu) for assistance.

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I will offer **online office hours on Zoom** M-Th 2-3 pm. I can also meet by appointment.

Finally, you need access to an external platform for online homework. This platform is provided by Macmillan and is called **Sapling**. It is available here: <https://www.saplinglearning.com/ibiscms/login/>. **Sapling costs \$42** and it is your only expense related to this course.

You need Google Chrome for Sapling to work well, not Mozilla Firefox or any other browser.

### ***Sapling Instructions***

#### **Step 1: Create An Account**

- Go to <https://www.saplinglearning.com/ibiscms/login/>
- Click Create an Account.
  - If you have a Facebook account, you can use it to quickly create a Sapling Learning account. Click **Create my account through Facebook**. You will be prompted to log into Facebook if you aren't already. Choose a username and password, then click **Link Account**.
  - Otherwise, supply the requested information and click **Create My Account**. Check your email (and spam filter) for a message from Sapling Learning and click on the link provided in that email. If you don't get the email within 30 minutes, contact technical support at <http://www.macmillanlearning.com/Catalog/techsupport>

#### **Step 2: Log In and Find this Course**

- Once you have created your account, log in using your user name and password.
- Once logged in, look for the gray bar entitled 'Enroll in a New Course'.
- Click Courses at University of Rhode Island > Principles of Microeconomics, and then click on the term (Semester 1) to expand the menu further.
- You should see this course listed as: **University of Rhode Island – ECN 201 Microeconomics – Summer21– RAMNARAIN**. Make sure to verify instructor name before signing up.

#### **Step 3: Pay to Access the course**

- The fee is \$42. You will need a credit card or a PayPal account to sign up.
- You can complete online problem sets once you have registered.
- If you have technical issues, you can contact Sapling technical support at 1-800-936-6899, M-Th 8-3am, F 8 – 12 am, Sat 12 pm – 8 pm, Sun 12 pm – 3 am. The instructor does not own or run Sapling and cannot help with tech issues (not loading properly, cannot see question etc.). I can help only with content issues.
- If you plan to stay in the course, the **deadline to sign up for the platform is May 27<sup>th</sup> Thursday**. No extensions will be given beyond this point. If not signed up by this date, I reserve the right to drop you from my class.

## **'CLASSROOM' PROTOCOL AND PARTICIPATION EXPECTATIONS**

For this online course, Brightspace is our “classroom.”

Once you sign into Brightspace, **please start at the START HERE module**, which will provide you with details on how the course will be run. Take some time to familiarize yourself with the course website and various Brightspace functions, using the video tutorials under the Help button on the top banner.

This is a **3-credit course**, which is run for about 5 weeks. It is an accelerated version of what would be covered in about 13 weeks of a regular semester. There is sometimes the impression that an online course is somehow going to be 'easier' ...it is, in terms of some flexibility, but it also is not, because it does require tremendous organization, motivation, and self-discipline from the learner. As with any course, what you put into this one, is what you get out of it in terms of enjoying and applying the material to the real world and to real-life situations.

In this online learning environment, your “attendance” is measured by **your presence and contributions** to the course discussions. The importance of regular log-ins and active participation cannot be overstated. I will gauge your participation by your regular, on-time forum postings and responses, and timely assignment submissions.

If you've never taken an online course, “hanging out” on Brightspace will take some getting used to, and it will be easy to forget about the course from time to time. I further recommend that you get in the habit of daily attendance online to maximize your successful completion of the course.

**Late work:** Please note that while no late work is accepted for discussions and discussion responses or exams, I will accept late work for problem sets up to 24 hours, with a penalty of 3 points.

## **INSTRUCTOR ROLE**

What can you expect from me, your instructor? Please know that I am here to help you navigate this material. There is no reason to struggle through it on your own ...please reach out and ask for help when you need it.

You can always expect prompt responses to emails (within 24 hours, but typically a whole lot sooner).

You can always request appointments for one-on-one sessions with the material over Zoom, should you need it. These sessions will not be tutoring sessions, but geared towards helping you with specific difficulties and answer your questions. I will help with whatever difficulties you may be having, but ultimately, the onus of this course is on you, and I cannot do the work for you! Grades are **earned** based on your mastery of the material (note also: grades are not based on effort!)

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You can always expect clear instructions, rubrics, and expectations for each assignment.

You can always expect reasonably prompt and thorough feedback on your work (1-3 days turnover time, but no longer than 5 business days).

**GRADES & ASSESSMENT**

While I endeavor to give you the best possible deal I can with your grade, ultimately **grades in this course are earned** through demonstrating proficiency in the learning goals, and not simply effort. Your grades will be calculated as follows:

ITEM	DETAILS	SCORE
Quizzes	Each is worth 5 points; best 10 out of 25 counted	50 points
Mid-session Exam	1 X 150	150 points
Final Exam	1 X 150	150 points
Participation	Weekly discussion posts & three responses; 30 points X 5	150 points
Introductory Activity	Completing the Start Here Module and posting introductions	25 points
Final Reflection	Completing the Final Reflection	25 points
Problem Sets	50 points each X 5	250 points

Note that your grade in the course depends on your score from 800 points. That is, **each percentage point is equal to 8 points.**

All students are required to have their own access to Sapling. Students are welcome to do the problem sets in groups although each student must submit each problem set individually. Notice that the problem sets, in total, are about 35% of your final grade, so if you do work in a group, make sure you take the time to fully understand the work. Don't let somebody else do it for you!

**Quizzes:** are for self-assessment (to make sure you understood the topics), practice with multiple-choice, and are relatively low stakes.

**Exams:** A significant portion of your grade will come from the midterm exam and the final exam. These exams will be open book and open notes, but you will have a limited amount of time in which to complete them once you begin and they must be completed by the deadline. Be very careful not to start the exam unless you are ready to do so! They will consist of multiple choice questions.

**Letter grades:** will be assigned as follows:

A: 94 and above	B: 84 – 86	C: 74 – 76	D: 60 – 65
A-: 90 – 94	B-: 80 – 83	C-: 70 – 73	F: 59 and below
B+: 87 – 87	C+: 77 – 79	D+: 66 - 69	

**OTHER FINE PRINT**

**Academic Honesty**

All submitted work must be your own. If you consult other sources (class readings, articles or books from the library, articles available through internet databases, or websites) these **MUST** be properly documented, or you will be charged with plagiarism and will receive an F for the work submitted.

In some cases, this may result in a failure of the course as well. In addition, the charge of academic dishonesty will go on your record in the Office of Student Life. If you have any doubt about what constitutes plagiarism, visit the following websites: the URI Student Handbook, and Sections 8.27.10 – 8.27.21 of the [University Manual](#).

Or please just ask if not sure!

**Student Conduct**

Students are expected to treat faculty and others students with dignity and respect. No getting personal/putdowns please. The “Student Code of Conduct” applies and is available in the [University Student Handbook](#).

I typically respond to emails fairly quickly (within 24 hours). However, there will be times (after work hours, late evenings, holidays, and weekends) when my response is slower. Please be considerate of these times.

Please use professional language in email correspondence: a proper greeting (no “hey” or “wassup?”), proper address (Dr./Prof.), a proper closing, and complete sentences. No txt talk pls!

Since I receive a lot of email every day, I may not respond to queries for which answers are obtainable elsewhere, starting with this syllabus.

**Accommodation for Special Needs**

I am happy to work with you on arranging any accommodations you may need to complete the course successfully. [Disability Services](#) for Students Office is at 330 Memorial Union, 401-874-2098.

**Make-up exams**

I will only give make-ups with a valid university excuse. I reserve the right to ask for documentation. Make-ups may consist of short-answer and essay questions.

In case of other emergencies/issues, your grade will be pro-rated. It is your responsibility to get in touch with me about any missing work/exam.

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**Religious Holidays**

As policy, URI accords students, on an individual basis, the opportunity to observe their traditional religious holidays. Written notification of such observances must be provided to the instructor at least two weeks prior.

**Academic Enhancement Center**

The work in this course is complex and intensive. To do the best you can, it's a good idea to contact the Academic Enhancement Center (AEC) for additional help/tutoring. The AEC offers a comfortable environment in which to study alone or together, with or without a tutor. AEC tutors can answer questions, clarify concepts, check understanding, and help you to study. Go to [www.uri.edu/aec](http://www.uri.edu/aec), or call (401) 874-2367, or stop by the fourth floor in Roosevelt Hall.

**The Writing Center**

The Writing Center is for all writers, all disciplines, at all levels, and all stages of writing.

If an instructor suggests that you go to the Writing Center, it is not a punishment, and doesn't mean that you are a terrible writer. It means the instructor wants you to receive more individualized attention to your writing than s/he is able to provide, given the constraints of the class. It will only improve your grade.

If possible, call ahead for an appointment: 401-874-4690. Drop-in tutorials are often available. You may make repeat appointments, requesting the same tutor each time if you wish. See their Web Page: <https://web.uri.edu/aec/writing/>

**COURSE OUTLINE**

Here is a **brief summary** of the schedule for the class. See syllabus for details!

\* **Module 1:** Choice, Opportunity Cost, Trade, & Economic Decision-Making

\* **Module 2:** Demand and Supply in Markets

\* **Module 3:** Production & Costs

\* **Module 4:** Markets Structures, Perfect & Imperfect Competition

\* **Module 5:** Externalities and Public Goods.

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**COURSE SCHEDULE**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topics</b>	<b>Required Reading</b>	<b>Assignments*</b>
May 24	Introduction	Syllabus and Start Here Module	Introduce Yourself and Respond to others.
May 25 – 31	Choice: Opportunity Cost, Trade and Decision-making	Ch. 1 (focus on sections 1.1 and 1.2), Stanford HO (posted on Brightspace), Ch. 2, and Ch. 19 (only 19.1 and 19.2)	Discussion 1; Problem Set 1 due May 31 <sup>st</sup>
June 1 - 7	Markets: Demand & Supply	Ch. 3, Ch. 4 (only 4.1), Ch. 5	Discussion 2; Problem Set 2 due June 7 <sup>th</sup>
June 8 – 14	The Firm: Production, Costs, and Perfect Competition	Colander Ch. 11 (excerpts), Ch. 7, Ch. 8	Discussion 3; Problem Set 3 due June 8 <sup>th</sup> <b>Midterm Exam June 8 – 9</b>
June 15 - 21	Market structures: Imperfect Competition	Ch. 9 and Ch. 10	Discussion 4; Problem Set 4 due on June 21 <sup>st</sup>
June 22 – 25	Externalities and Public Goods	Ch. 12 and Ch. 13	Discussion 5; Problem Set 5 due June 25 <sup>th**</sup>
June 26 – 27	Final Exam	..	<b>Final Exam due June 27<sup>th</sup></b> by 11:59 pm.

\* Assignments are typically due at 11:59 pm, end of day.

\*\* Please note the unusual deadline, which is a Friday.

Other important dates:

- Last day to drop (with 50% refund): June 1<sup>st</sup>
- Final grades posted: July 2<sup>nd</sup>