

Econ 0100 | Fall 2026

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Course Description

Economists ask a big question, “What choices should we make when we can’t have everything?” Each of us make hundreds of choices every day as an individual and as a member of a larger social, economic, and political environment. This class is about this question, examining individual choices and how choices interact in groups. Tools in this class organize your thinking about decisions we face as individuals and as a society.

In Part A we set the table for the semester by building a model of cooperation, production, and shared benefit. In Part B we examine how markets can coordinate cooperation across large groups of decision-makers. In Part C we introduce externalities and other ways markets fail, along with some policy tools to correct the problems. In Part D we study strategic interaction: games, the commons, public goods, and voting. In Part E we consider how sellers’ decisions generate the supply curve, examining market power and decision dynamics. In Part F we close out the semester by building a model of buyers’ choices, generating the demand curve.

Economics relies heavily on mathematics as a cognitive step-stool. Proficiency in algebra is helpful for this class. But no matter who you are or where you’re coming from, if you’re willing to work hard, you are more than capable of excelling in the class. Welcome!

Logistics

Classes meet in David Lawrence 120 on most Mondays and Wednesdays at 12PM and 1PM. Classes introduce new ideas, work through exercises, run simulations,

and offer Checkpoints. Your TA will facilitate guided practice in your recitation on Thursday or Friday. These recitations are a low-stakes environment for longer practice sessions in a smaller groups of students broken out from the lecture. Then we'll send you off to finish studying and work on your homework with your classmates. Economics is best learned through practice, so put in the time and reps to master it.

Core course resources include:

- **Teaching Assistants** are highly trained economists in the graduate department who are 1) your first person of contact with questions, and 2) facilitate weekly recitations. Do not hesitate to be in touch with your TA.
- **Course Website** holds the class together, where you'll find:
 - **The Skillsheet** lists every assessed skill your grade is built from.
 - **Videos** cover core content.
 - **Homework** for your practice.
 - **Demos** as extra practice problem videos for the Checkpoints.
 - **Office Hours** are a great resource. Come see me or your TA!
- **Canvas** records your passed skills and my announcements.
- **Gradescope** will be the portal to collect and return assignments.
- **The Textbook** for the class is OpenStax's *Principles of Microeconomics* (3rd edition) — a free, openly licensed textbook you can read on the web or download as a PDF at <https://openstax.org>. A copy is also posted on the course page. If you'd like a second reference, Gregory Mankiw's *Principles of Microeconomics* is excellent, and used copies of any edition are inexpensive. Let me know if you have questions.

Grading

You belong in my classroom no matter your grade in the class. I've deliberately designed the class to push you to do excellent work and give you the best opportunity to succeed. In return I expect you to work hard.

Your Final Grade is the percentage of assessed **skills** that you pass/no-pass on **Checkpoints** and **Reattempts**. Checkpoints and Reattempts allow you to save your progress in the class: skills you pass stay passed; and if you no-pass a skill on an in-class Checkpoint, you can try again during a Reattempt. The assessed skills are those that appear on a Checkpoint this semester and are recorded on the **Skillsheet** with their posted standard. If you meet the standard, you pass the skill. For example, if you pass 94% of the skills, your final grade is a 94%. Letter grades follow the standard breaks:

97.0% and above	A+	93.0% to 96.9%	A	90.0% to 92.9%	A-
87.0% to 89.9%	B+	83.0% to 86.9%	B	80.0% to 82.9%	B-
77.0% to 79.9%	C+	73.0% to 76.9%	C	70.0% to 72.9%	C-
67.0% to 69.9%	D+	63.0% to 66.9%	D	60.0% to 62.9%	D-

Below 60% is an F. There is no curve: your grade does not depend on anyone else's grade. Everyone can get an A, and I'd be thrilled!

There will be one Checkpoint for each of the six parts: Parts A-E in class roughly every other week (dates in the schedule below) and Part F during the Final Exam Period. Your study of a skill does not end at the Checkpoint. Reattempt sessions will be offered throughout the semester (timing and logistics will be announced on Canvas). Reattempts can only help you: all skills you've passed stay passed. A reattempt replaces your first attempt *only in your favor*. You only redo the skills you haven't yet passed.

The Final Exam Period will include Checkpoint F and a reattempt session.

During Checkpoints and Reattempts

1. You may use material from your notes and the textbook.
2. You may not use any electronic material other than a calculator.
3. Your exam should be your own and is subject to the Academic Conduct Code (below). If you are **at all unclear** about a particular piece of material with respect to these two guidelines, it is your responsibility to clarify its appropriateness with the instructor. This is taken very seriously.

Practice

Learning is done through study and practice. Practice unlocks skills on the Checkpoints and Reattempts.

- Complete **2 of 3** types of practice for a skill to unlock a first attempt.
- Complete **3 of 3** types of practice for a skill to unlock a reattempt.

Each skill has three types of practice:

1. **Exercises (due in class)** are structured practice done *together in class*.
2. **Vignettes (due in rec.)** are guided practice done *together in recitation*.
3. **Homework (due on Mondays)** is practice done on *your own time*.

Practice is graded for completion not correctness. You're allowed to make mistakes. Group work on homework is strongly encouraged. I'd go as far as to say that if you're not working in a group, you're not doing this class right. Teach and learn from your classmates.

You may sit for a Checkpoint even if you have not unlocked every skill. Simply answer the skills you *have* unlocked on schedule. Practice cannot be made up before a Checkpoint. But you may make up any of your missed practice after the Checkpoint during the next Reattempt.

Disability Services

If I were a student at Pitt today I would qualify for accommodations and would use those resources. If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both your instructor and Disability Resources and Services (DRS), 140 William Pitt Union, (412) 648-7890, drsrecep@pitt.edu, (412) 228-5347 for P3 ASL users, as early as possible in the term. DRS will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course.

Email Policy

Don't hesitate to email me or your TA with questions. When you do, be considerate of a few things. First, I will try to respond to you as quickly as possible. It's easiest for me to respond if your email has a direct question. I get a considerable number of emails, so during busy times it may take longer than a day or two to get back to you. Second, I do not check emails outside of regular working hours, so if you email me at night or on the weekend, I likely won't see your email until later. This is a good practice I'd encourage for you too.

AI Policy

Artificial intelligence can be a powerful tool and something you will need to be familiar with in your life and work. This class does not prohibit use of AI. But keep the design of the class in mind: your grade comes entirely from skills you demonstrate yourself on paper in class. Practice is for you to develop those skills. If you simply hand your practice to an AI to do for you, you'll feel it on the Checkpoints. I would encourage you to treat Homework like a Checkpoint, doing it without the direct aid of AI. If you find a clever use of AI, particularly for studying or note creation, I'd love to hear about it!

Academic Conduct Code

All students are expected to adhere to the standards of the University of Pittsburgh's Policy on Academic Integrity. Any violation is a serious matter. Any student engaged in cheating, plagiarism, or other acts of academic dishonesty would be subject to disciplinary action, and may 1) fail all skills assessed on the Checkpoint in question with no reattempt, or 2) receive an F in the class.

Course Schedule (*Tentative*)

Students are responsible for all covered materials, announcements, and assignments. I reserve the right to modify materials/procedures.

Part	Classes	Read	Checkpoint
A	Aug. 24 – Sept. 2	Ch. 1, 2; 19.1–19.3	Wed. Sept. 9
B	Sept. 9 – 30	Ch. 3, 4, 5	Wed. Sept. 30
C	Oct. 5 – 14	Ch. 20, 12	Wed. Oct. 14
D	Oct. 19 – 28	Ch. 10.2, 13, 18	Wed. Oct. 28
E	Nov. 2 – 18	Ch. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11	Mon. Nov. 30
F	Nov. 30 – Dec. 2	Ch. 6	Final Exam Period

No class Sept. 7 (Labor Day) or Nov. 23/25 (Thanksgiving Recess).

Final Exam Period: Dec. 7–11	
Section on M/W at 12PM	Section on M/W at 1PM
Not Yet Set	Not Yet Set