Economy & Society  
(A gentle introduction to Economics)  
UGST 4076 – Winter 2023

Central European University

No. of credits: 2 US / 4 ECTS  
Course e-learning site: CEU Moodle  
Meeting time: Mondays and Wednesdays, 9:30 – 10:30  
Classroom: QS A-415

Instructor: Dr. Michael Dorsch, Associate Professor  
Contact: DorschM@ceu.edu  
Office hours: Mondays, 16:00 – 17:00  
Office: QS B-411

(Occasional) TA: Vlad Surdea-Hernea, PhD researcher  
Contact: surdea-hernea_vlad@phd.ceu.edu  
Office hours: TBD  
Office: QS B-603

Course description

This undergraduate class provides a gentle introduction to modern economics for students who are not following a major field of study in economics, specifically those in the Culture, Politics, and Society BA program. Economists rely heavily on mathematical models and statistical techniques in their analyses and most introductory courses provide a primer on the technical details of economic methodology. While the course does equip students with some of the analytical tools that economists use, the focus is more on developing economic intuition and literacy, rather than technical mastery. The primary goal of the course is to enable students to apply principles of economics to understand market scenarios, to their own decision-making, and to analyze complex public policy questions. Most sessions will be lecture format, but students will find a variety of supplemental activities, including empirical exercises that orient students with the kind of data that economists typically utilize and in-class presentations and debates on contemporary economic issues.
Primary learning objectives

1. Introduction to market economics, from both the microeconomic and macroeconomic perspectives;

2. Develop economic intuition and literacy, enabling meaningful engagement with economic issues;

3. Apply economic theory to analyze decision-making, market outcomes, and public policy issues; and

4. Understand and appreciate how economists use theoretical and empirical techniques to analyze contemporary economic and social problems.

Primary textbooks


Additional sources

Print: The Economist, Project Syndicate, Journal of Economic Perspectives

Podcasts: Think like an economist, Freakonomics radio, Women in economics, American Economics Association research highlights, Peterson Institute trade talks

Attendance

Students are expected to attend every course session. Students may be excused from attending class only in the case of a documented emergency (health or residency status). More than two unexcused absences may result in a failing grade for the course, in accordance with university policy. There will be no hybrid classes.

Multi-media presentations

Students must make one (individual) presentation on a contemporary topic in economics. The presentation should be based on an article from the press, a news video clip, a video clip of economic commentary, or a fictional video clip that displays an economic topic studied in class. Presentations should last 10 minutes. Appropriate topics for the presentations can be discussed with the teaching assistant. (Sign-up Google sheet)
Examination

Students will sit for one in-class midterm exam (60 minutes) and one in-class final exam (120 minutes). Exams are closed-book and hand-written.

Requirements and evaluation

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>Week 4 or 8 or 12</td>
<td>25 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm exam</td>
<td>October 25</td>
<td>25 %</td>
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<td>Final exam</td>
<td>December 13</td>
<td>50 %</td>
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Grading scale

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Course outline (subject to change)

09/18: Introduction and technical primer

Required reading:

- S&W, GR-1 (graph review)
- S&W, chapter 1

Further reading:


09/20: Demand and consumer choice

Required reading:

- S&W, chapter 2
09/25: Supply and producer choice
   Required reading:
   – S&W, chapter 3

09/27: Market equilibrium
   Required reading:
   – S&W, chapter 4
   Further reading:

09/29: Market elasticity (make-up for 10/02)
   Required reading:
   – S&W, chapter 5
   Further reading:

10/02: No class

10/04: No class

10/09: Market interventions
   Required reading:
   – S&W, chapter 6
   Further reading:
10/11: Welfare economics
   Required reading:
       – S&W, chapter 7

10/13: Student multi-media presentations (make-up for 10/04)

10/16: Comparative advantage
   Required reading:
       – S&W, chapter 8

10/18: International trade
   Required reading:
       – S&W, chapter 9

10/23: Externalities and public goods
   Required reading:
       – S&W, chapter 10

10/25: Mid-term exam

10/30: Sizing up the macroeconomy – GDP
   Required reading:
       – S&W, chapter 21

   Further reading:

11/01: No class – Allerheiligen
11/06: Economic growth  
   Required reading:  
   – S&W, chapter 22

11/08: Student multi-media presentations

11/13: Unemployment  
   Required reading:  
   – S&W, chapter 23

11/15: Inflation  
   Required reading:  
   – S&W, chapter 24  
   Further reading:  
   – “Why inflation persists,” Project Syndicate (2023)  

11/20: The financial sector  
   Required reading:  
   – S&W, chapter 27

11/22: Tracking the business cycle  
   Required reading:  
   – S&W, chapter 29

11/27: Aggregate demand and aggregate supply  
   Required reading:  
   – S&W, chapter 33
11/29: Monetary policy
   Required reading:
   – S&W, chapter 34

12/04: Fiscal policy
   Required reading:
   – S&W, chapter 35

12/06: Student multi-media presentations

12/08: (Optional) review session with TA

12/13: Final exam, 9:30 – 11:30