
A A E 215

Introduction to Agricultural and Applied Economics

Spring 2021

Description: Introduction to economic ways of thinking about a wide range of problems and issues. Topics include consumption, production, prices, markets, finance, trade, pollution, growth, farms, taxes, and development.

Prerequisite(s): None

Instruction Mode: Online Instruction

Location and Schedule: Canvas / Asynchronous lecture with synchronous discussion sections

Canvas Course URL: <https://canvas.wisc.edu/courses/227050>

How the Credit Hours are Met: This class includes approximately 90 minutes of recorded video lectures and 90 minutes of discussion / group work per week. It also carries the expectation that students will work on course learning activities (reading, writing, problem sets, studying, etc.) for about 4 hours outside of the classroom for every class period (8 hours per week).

Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)

1. Develop analytical tools necessary to critically analyze applied economics topics including agricultural economics.
 2. Demonstrate competency in fundamental economic concepts.
 3. Become familiar with a wide variety of economic issues and relevant policies, such as the challenges facing agriculture and related government interventions.
 4. Apply concepts to real world examples.
 5. Evaluate models and arguments using quantitative information.¹
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Instructor

Instructor: Jordan van Rijn, PhD

E-mail: vanrijn@wisc.edu

Office: Taylor Hall Room 520 / Remote (via Zoom)

Student hours: Fridays, 12:30pm – 2:00pm or by appointment (via Zoom)

Zoom information for office hours and lectures:

Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84386712737>

Meeting ID: 843 8671 2737

One tap mobile:

+13126266799,,84386712737# US (Chicago)

¹ Meets the Quantitative Reasoning B (QR-B) general education requirement.

Notes about student hours: Instead of the typical “office hours”, I refer to “student hours” to emphasize that this is *your* time. I very much encourage students to use this time in a way that can best support your learning. Students can feel free to join to ask questions about the class material, get to know the professor better, ask about career goals, or just hang out. I recognize that the virtual environment does not allow for as much interaction between students and professors, so I wanted to provide this space to mimic as closely as possible in-person office hours and informal interactions on campus, such as chatting after class. Keep in mind that interactions with your professors are an important part of the learning experience at university, and can also help with letters of recommendation, career and internship connections, etc.

To access student hours, simply click on the above Zoom link or call in and provide the above meeting ID. There is no password required, however, students will be initially placed into a waiting room to ensure that incoming students are not interrupting others already in the room. If the room is empty, the instructor or TA will let you in immediately. However, if another student is in the room and wants to chat one-on-one, there may be a wait before being able to enter the Zoom meeting room.

Communication

- Please contact me by e-mail if you have any questions or concerns. I commit to responding to e-mails within 24 hours during the week and 48 hours on weekends/Holidays. You should cc the TA in all of your emails as she may be able to respond to your email in a more timely matter. I also encourage you to stop by my office hours via Zoom or in person in Taylor Hall.

Teaching Assistant (TA)

Teaching Assistant: Nicole Karwowski
E-mail: nkarwowski@wisc.edu
Student hours: Thursdays, 9:00am – 11:00 am or by appointment (via Zoom)

Zoom information for Nicole’s office hours and discussion sections:

Zoom link: <https://uwmadison.zoom.us/j/4437139922>

Meeting ID: 443 713 9922

One tap mobile

+13126266799,,4437139922# US (Chicago)

+19292056099,,4437139922# US (New York)

Dial by your location

+1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago)

eBook

The required textbook for this class will be *Principles of Microeconomics, 1st Edition. Betsey Stevenson and Justin Wolfers*. Students will use an eTextbook or eText version and digital learning tool (DLT, e.g., homework or lab software package) for this course and DO NOT need to buy a print version. The eText or eText & DLT will cost \$74.99 and will be accessible via the Canvas course site no later than the first day of class. The fee will be billed via the students' tuition bills. eTexts are typically 40% - 80% lower than list print prices. For more information on what eText or eText & DLT your course will be using, please see <https://kb.wisc.edu/97637>.

There is also an optional textbook, *Introduction to Agricultural Economics*, by Penson, Capps, Rosson and Woodward. I will use this textbook for my lectures, problems and examples specifically related to agricultural economics. I will post my related PowerPoint slides which will have all of the information needed for the class; however, for students that are particularly interested in the topic of agricultural economics, you may want to consider purchasing a copy of the textbook. (I am using the [seventh edition](#)).

CATME

We will use CATME SMARTER Teamwork (CATME). CATME is a system of secure, web-based tools that enable instructors to implement best practices in managing student teams. The tools and training are supported by the literature on teamwork and training, along with independent empirical research. The CATME system enhances team learning by teaching students how to contribute effectively to teamwork and creating accountability for team-member contributions. The system facilitates communication among teammates and between students and their instructor. This helps student teams have the best chance of being successful so that students and instructors have positive and meaningful team learning experiences. Watch [these](#) videos on how to start on CATME.

Video Lectures & Supplementary Material

Since this is an online asynchronous course, the main mode of lecture instruction is online instructional videos that I have pre-recorded. As with any course, it is imperative that you **view all of the video lectures** in sequence and in a timely manner. The videos for each module will be released at the beginning of each 3-to-4 week session. There will be approximately 3 – 4 video lectures per week, and each video will be approximately 15 – 20 minutes in length. You are encouraged to stop, replay and review the videos as needed to fully understand the material.

In addition, each week will include supplementary material to help you learn the main concepts. These will include weekly [Think Like an Economist podcasts](#) by Betsey Stevenson and Justin Wolfers, the authors of our textbook. There is a podcast for each chapter of the textbook. Students are expected to also listen to each podcast and any other supplementary material before discussion section on Thursday or Friday.

Note: Between the video lectures, textbook and podcasts, some of the material will be repeated. However, seeing and hearing the material in different formats (i.e., visual, auditory, reading, etc.) and with different examples is a great way to fully process and engage with the concepts, and prepare for the problem sets and other assignments.

Grading

In this class, we will adhere to University grading standards and policies of academic misconduct. Cheating or plagiarizing may result in a grade of F and report to the Dean of Students. Except when clearly stated, all work is to be done individually. However, students are encouraged to study together and to engage in the discussion of topics and readings presented in class. The usual grading scale will apply (see below), though I reserve the right to curve the grade distribution in your favor (e.g. A = 94 pts or higher).

Grading Scale	
A (Excellent)	>94 pts.
AB (Intermediate grade)	88 – 93 pts.
B (Good)	82 – 87 pts.
BC (Intermediate grade)	76 – 81 pts.
C (Fair)	70 – 75 pts.
D (Poor)	60 – 69 pts.
F (Failure)	0 – 59 pts.

Schedule

Below is the weekly schedule of topics and required readings in the Stevenson and Wolfers text.

Module	Week	Date	Lecture Topic / Chapter	# Pages
1	1	Jan. 25 – 31	Chapter 1: The Core Principles of Economics	29
	2	Feb. 1 – 7	Chapter 2: Demand	22
	3	Feb. 8 – 14	Chapter 3: Supply	23
	4	Feb. 15 – 21	Chapter 4: Equilibrium: Where Supply Meets Demand	19
2	5	Feb. 22 – 28	Chapter 5: Elasticity: Measuring Responsiveness	24
	6	March 1 – 7	Chapter 6: When Governments Intervene in Markets	22
	7	March 8 – 14	Chapter 7: Welfare and Efficiency	23
	8	March 15 – 21	Chapter 8: Gains from Trade / (<i>Optional</i> : Chapter 9: Intl. Trade)	18
3	9	March 22 – 28	Chapter 10: Externalities and Public Goods	26
	10	March 29 – April 4	Chapter 11: The Labor Market	23
	11	April 5 – April 11	Chapter 13: Inequality, Social Insurance and Redistribution	24
	12	April 12 – 18	Chapter 14: Market Structure and Market Power	23
4	13	April 19 – 25	Chapter 16: Business Strategy	25
	14	April 26 – May 2	Chapters 19 - 20: Decisions Involving Uncertainty & Private Information	45

Rubric

Your grade in this class will be determined by the following activities:

Learning Curves / Pre-Class Tutorials (weekly)	15%
Group / Discussion Section Work (weekly)	15%
Participation / Discussion Board (weekly)	10% (see below)
News Policy Briefs (2)	20% (10% each)
Problem Sets (4)	40% (10% each)

Learning Curves: Learning Curves are adaptive game-like quizzes that will help you to focus on the material you need to review the most. When you get a question wrong you will receive feedback and links to the book for review—and a chance to try again. These activities are **due by Sunday each week** and are graded based on completion [complete/incomplete], i.e. you are not being tested on your prior knowledge.

Group / Discussion Section Work: The instructor and TA will offer weekly Discussion Sections for 50 minutes on Fridays. All discussions are remote via Zoom except for the Friday 2:25pm session. (We decided to offer one in-person session for students that have a strong preference for in-person learning). These sessions will include a brief review of the weekly material and some practice problems. Students will then be divided into groups to work on additional practice problems. The group may need to meet outside of the discussion section to complete the group assignment. Groups will be created at the beginning of the semester based on your discussion section. **Each group will be expected to record their answers each week and upload them by Sunday at midnight** to the Discussion / Group Work page. You can upload the assignment in any format that is convenient (e.g., Word, PDF, etc.) and should include the names of each member that worked on it at the bottom of the assignment. Group members will be evaluated on completeness and correctness of weekly assignments, as well as peer evaluations after each module.

Note: Students are required to attend discussion section each week and complete the group assignments. However, if you are unable to attend due to an emergency, please let the instructor or TA know as soon as possible (ideally, before the discussion meets).

Zoom Links / Rooms for discussions:

1. Fridays, 9:55am – 10:45am (Nicole):

- Zoom link: Zoom link: <https://uwmadison.zoom.us/j/4437139922>
- Meeting ID: 443 713 9922
- Passcode: NA
- One tap mobile: +13126266799,,4437139922# US (Chicago)

2. Fridays, 11am – 11:50am (Jordan):

- Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86498743833?pwd=YTBmUFRXYUVJUjNvTnY1cEEeVSt5dz09>
- Meeting ID: 864 9874 3833
- Passcode: ECON123
- One tap mobile: +13126266799,,86498743833# US (Chicago)

3. Fridays, 1:20pm – 2:10pm (Nicole):

- Zoom link: Zoom link: <https://uwmadison.zoom.us/j/4437139922>
- Meeting ID: 443 713 9922
- Passcode: NA
- One tap mobile: +13126266799,,4437139922# US (Chicago)

4. **Fridays, 2:25pm – 3:15pm (Jordan):**
 - a. In-person
 - b. Room: 1106 Mechanical Engineering

Problem Sets: At the end of each module students will work on a selection of problems (between 6 and 8 problems per chapter, or about 24 – 36 problems per problem set). These problems will be similar to the practice problems covered during the discussion sections. The problem sets will be done online through MacMillan Achieve (via the Canvas site). You may work in pairs or groups on the problem sets, but please note that you are expected to contribute to this effort and academic integrity standards apply, i.e. copying/pasting is not allowed and each student is expected to submit their answers in their own words. Although the problem sets are online, you are asked to (and expected to) state your reasoning “in your own words”. Late problem sets receive a 10% penalty per day that they are late after the due date up to three days (see “Late Submissions” policy below).

Class Participation & Discussion Board: The instructor or TA will provide a prompt every week on the Canvas Discussion Board. You should **post at least once per week** to the Discussion Board throughout the semester. (Note that you can post twice the following week to make up a previous week’s missed post; however, you must notify the TA or instructor to receive full credit for the missed post, and cannot receive credit for more than two posts during each week. In other words, you cannot skip several weeks and then make them all up by posting a lot during a subsequent week). The posts can be responses to the instructor’s / TA’s weekly prompt, new questions regarding the material or assignments, or responses to other students’ questions. Comments must be substantive and contribute to the overall discussion in order to receive full credit. You will receive full credit for answering the question or commenting on at least two students’ posts. **Prompts will be provided on Monday of each week and responses must be posted by Sunday at midnight.** In general, I will wait for students to answer questions of other students before posting myself (or having the TA post).

News/Policy Application Brief: You will complete two News/Policy Briefs throughout the semester, one based on the first 2 modules and the second based on modules 3 - 4. This is an **individual assignment**. You will choose a recent news article related to the topics covered in lecture. Specifically, find an article that includes some kind of economic policy proposal (i.e., minimum wage, carbon tax, rent control, international trade agreement, etc.). Alternatively, you may find an article that includes a problem (i.e., pollution, traffic congestion, unaffordable housing, etc.) and then propose a policy solution. Then prepare a brief (maximum 3 to 4 pages) where you identify, define and illustrate some topics covered in class, and relate the article to some key issues. **The Policy Briefs are due on March 21st and May 9th.** More details are provided in a separate document. Late policy briefs receive a 10% penalty per day that they are late after the due date up to three days (see “Late Submissions” policy below).

Late Submissions: Late submissions receive a 10% deduction for every day that they are turned in past the deadline up to (3) days. Submissions received after 3 days will receive a zero. However, this only applies to the Problem Sets, News Policy Briefs and weekly group discussion assignments. The Learning Curves and Discussion Board posts must be turned in by Sunday at midnight of each week. This provides you with some flexibility regarding the deadline but also means that I will generally not make other exceptions for late assignments. However, please notify me by e-mail as soon as possible if you do have an emergency or other extenuating circumstance regarding a particular assignment. I recognize that during the COVID-19 pandemic there is significant uncertainty and I plan to be as supportive and flexible as I can during this challenging semester. However, you should generally still plan to do your assignments on time and not miss deadlines without valid excuses.



ACADEMIC POLICIES

RULES, RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES

- See the Guide's to [Rules, Rights and Responsibilities](#)

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

By enrolling in this course, each student assumes the responsibilities of an active participant in UW-Madison's community of scholars in which everyone's academic work and behavior are held to the highest academic integrity standards. Academic misconduct compromises the integrity of the university. Cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, and helping others commit these acts are examples of academic misconduct, which can result in disciplinary action. This includes but is not limited to failure on the assignment/course, disciplinary probation, or suspension. Substantial or repeated cases of misconduct will be forwarded to the Office of Student Conduct & Community Standards for additional review. For more information, refer to studentconduct.wiscweb.wisc.edu/academic-integrity/.

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

The University of Wisconsin-Madison supports the right of all enrolled students to a full and equal educational opportunity. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Wisconsin State Statute (36.12), and UW-Madison policy (Faculty Document 1071) require that students with disabilities be reasonably accommodated in instruction and campus life. Reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities is a shared faculty and student responsibility. Students are expected to inform me of their need for instructional accommodations by the end of the third week of the semester, or as soon as possible after a disability has been incurred or recognized. I will work either directly with the student or in coordination with the McBurney Center to identify and provide reasonable instructional accommodations. *To maintain the confidentiality of your request, please do not approach me before or after class to discuss accommodation needs, email me or meet with me during my office hours.* Disability information, including instructional accommodations as part of a student's educational record, is confidential and protected under FERPA. For more information, refer to <http://mcburney.wisc.edu/facstaffother/faculty/syllabus.php>

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

Diversity is a source of strength, creativity, and innovation for UW-Madison. We value the contributions of each person and respect the profound ways their identity, culture, background, experience, status, abilities, and opinion enrich the university community. We commit ourselves to the pursuit of excellence in teaching, research, outreach, and diversity as inextricably linked goals. The University of Wisconsin-Madison fulfills its public mission by creating a welcoming and inclusive community for people from every background – people who as students, faculty, and staff serve Wisconsin and the world. For more information, refer to <https://diversity.wisc.edu/>