

**William & Mary
Principles of Microeconomics
Syllabus**

ECON 101
Spring 2026
Mon., Wed., Fri.
10:00am - 10:50am
Washington Hall 201

Peter McHenry
317A Chancellors Hall
Office: (757) 221-1796
pmchenry@wm.edu

Course description and objectives

This course is for any student and has no pre-requisites. It also carries the Cultures, Societies, and the Individual (CSI) knowledge domain attribute for the COLL curriculum.

The principles of microeconomics will help you make decisions and understand what goes on in the world we observe. We will study the behavior of individual people, business firms, and governments. We will also study how the interactions among those actors induce observed social phenomena including production, prices, taxes, government regulation, and employment. The tools in this course are also useful in dating, raising children, planning vacations, and eating out. They will help you get a job after college.

The objective of the course is to enable students to think like economists when they want to. This includes identifying and weighing costs against benefits in making a choice, recognizing the incentives facing others, knowing the virtues of the market system, and knowing the weaknesses of the market system.

Limitation on technology in the classroom (i.e., no laptops policy)

Research (including by economists¹) suggests that prohibiting electronic devices from college classrooms can promote learning. Laptop computers – in particular – distract their owners and students around them. And laptops aren't particularly useful for taking notes in an ECON 101 class. For those reasons, laptop computers are prohibited from our class meetings. If you have a registered accommodation for laptop computer use in class, please let me know.

Poll Everywhere and in-class quizzes

But I encourage phone use, because we will use a student response system called Poll Everywhere in class to complement lectures and facilitate quizzes. You might want to download the free Poll Everywhere app to your phone.

Please use the URL below for information about registering for an account and associating your account with my class.

<https://www.wm.edu/offices/it/services/responsecollection/studentresponsesystem/index.php>

There is no fee associated with your student Poll Everywhere account; however, you must log-in with your W&M e-mail and password by selecting the “SSO” option at log-in.

Most polls in class will be informal and ungraded. Some will be formal and graded. I plan to have formal in-class quizzes on Poll Everywhere beginning on February 2. Formal in-class quizzes will account for 4 percent of the course grade. In-class quizzes are not listed on the

¹ Carter, Susan Payne, Kyle Greenberg, and Michael S. Walker. 2017. “The Impact of Computer Usage on Academic Performance: Evidence from a Randomized Trial at the United States Military Academy.” *Economics of Education Review* 56: 118–132.

course schedule but will occur frequently. They make attendance in class count toward your grade. Students who miss an in-class quiz will receive their final exam score in its place. This is a way to give students a make-up opportunity for missing in-class polls that are graded.

Weekly quizzes

You will learn more economics if you study throughout the semester (ideally every day) rather than just before exams. With that in mind, I assigned weekly quizzes. Each weekly quiz consists of 15 multiple-choice questions on Blackboard. Answers will be revealed after the quiz is due at the end of Sunday (11:59pm) each week.

Weekly quizzes are to help you study steadily and keep up with class material. They come along when the material is relatively new and are not intended to reveal the ultimate depth of your understanding. Therefore, the weekly quiz questions are less challenging than exams, which come after more study and are designed to reveal different levels of understanding. So please don't use the weekly quizzes to check whether you're prepared for an exam.

Weekends near a midterm exam will have no quiz. Spring Break weekend and the last week of classes will have ungraded quizzes (just for studying). See Blackboard for details.

I will drop your lowest weekly quiz score (e.g., a zero for skipping the quiz) before calculating the average for the course grade.

Examinations

The course includes three midterm exams and a final exam. See the schedule below for their dates. ***There will be no alternative dates for missed midterm exams (make-up exams). Missing an exam earns a zero for that exam.*** Please check your personal schedule against the exams in the course schedule below.

I will replace your lowest midterm exam score with your final exam score if the final is better than the midterm. If the final exam score is lower than the lowest midterm score, then I won't make a replacement. This policy provides a way to miss a midterm exam if necessary without reducing the course grade. It is also an insurance policy to shield students from single disappointing midterm exam performances.

A student who has already missed a midterm exam and misses another may be exempted from the latter exam in extenuating circumstances. Those include illness and participation in William & Mary sanctioned events that preclude taking the exam. Students pursuing such an exemption should discuss the situation with Prof. McHenry prior to the exam if at all possible and must provide documentation of the conflict.

The final exam is cumulative and mandatory. Make-up final exams will be available only in extraordinary circumstances with documentation from the Office of Undergraduate Academic Affairs.

William & Mary accommodates students with disabilities in accordance with federal laws and university policy. If you feel you may need an accommodation based on the impact of a learning, psychiatric, physical, or chronic health diagnosis, please contact Student Accessibility Services staff at sas@wm.edu to determine if accommodations are warranted and to obtain an official letter of accommodation. For more information, see www.wm.edu/sas. This is a student responsibility, not a professor responsibility. If this applies to you, please begin the process weeks before the first exam.

Course requirements

Formal quizzes in class (Poll Everywhere)	4%
Weekly quizzes (on Blackboard)	8%
Midterm exams (3 of them, 20% each)	60%
Final exam	<u>28%</u>
	100%

Grading standards

Letter grades for the course will be based on a standard 100-point scale where 93-100 implies an A, 90-92.9 implies an A-, 88-89.9 implies a B+, 83-87.9 implies a B, and so on. I will adjust exam grades up if the class median is low. In particular, I will increase all scores uniformly until the median is at least 82 (B-), except that the maximum score increase is 10 points. I will not adjust scores downward if the median is high.

Student hours (a.k.a. office hours, open door hours) and other access to the instructor

I will be available in Chancellors Hall room 228 from 1pm to 2pm each Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday during the semester. Room 228 is a group meeting room on the second floor of Chancellors Hall (to accommodate more students than my office can). *You do not need to schedule an appointment to meet with me during student hours. Just come.* Please send me e-mail if you need to schedule a meeting outside of those times.

Honor Code

I encourage you to collaborate in your studies and discussion of economics this semester. However, weekly quizzes and all exam work should be completed without the aid of other people (e.g., classmates). You may refer to class notes or a textbook while completing weekly quizzes but not during exams. That is, exams will be “closed book.” The use of unauthorized aid on a weekly quiz or an exam is a violation of the Honor Code.

Textbooks

The course does not require a textbook, but I included links in the Blackboard course page to a free online textbook called *Principles of Microeconomics 3e*. It’s at OpenStax here: <https://openstax.org/details/books/principles-microeconomics-3e/>. Another good option is *Principles of Microeconomics* by Greg Mankiw. There is a tenth edition of the book, but I’m sure that a fourth or later edition would be equally helpful. If I were in your shoes, I’d buy a used copy. I just found used seventh editions for about \$25 at amazon.com. Most introductory microeconomics textbooks cover the same material, and I think you would do equally well with any of the major options (e.g., Krugman & Wells; Hubbard & O’Brien; Case, Fair, & Oster).

Songs

My family is full of musicians. We’ve enjoyed finding music about economics. Before class meetings, I’ll play a song related to the day’s topic. If you’re interested, look for the list of songs at Spotify:

<https://open.spotify.com/user/petermchenry/playlist/1BvBP2NnGFDOp7Wm6g3BOL>.

Schedule

Wed. 1/21	Introduction to economic thinking
Fri. 1/23	Political and economic institutions
Mon. 1/26	Principles of microeconomics
Wed. 1/28	W&M Mercantile Exchange
Fri. 1/30	Introduction to markets and Demand <i>Add/Drop period ends</i>
Mon. 2/2	More about demand
Wed. 2/4	Supply
Fri. 2/6	More about supply
Mon. 2/9	Review
Tues. 2/10	<i>Supplemental review session, 8pm to 9pm (on Zoom; link will be on Blackboard)</i>
Wed. 2/11	Midterm exam 1
Fri. 2/13	Market equilibrium
Mon. 2/16	Applications of market demand, supply, and equilibrium
Wed. 2/18	Elasticity
Fri. 2/20	Applications of market equilibrium and elasticity
Mon. 2/23	Positive versus normative analysis; Consumer surplus and producer surplus
Wed. 2/25	Market prices and efficiency
Fri. 2/27	Efficiency and critiques of the market allocation
Mon. 3/2	Price controls
Wed. 3/4	Taxation
Fri. 3/6	Costs of taxation
SPRING BREAK	
Mon. 3/16	Review
Tues. 3/17	<i>Supplemental review session, 8pm to 9pm (on Zoom; link will be on Blackboard)</i>
Wed. 3/18	Midterm exam 2
Fri. 3/20	Externalities
Mon. 3/23	More about externalities <i>Last day to withdraw</i>
Wed. 3/25	Public goods
Fri. 3/27	Common resources
Mon. 3/30	Costs of production
Wed. 4/1	Firms maximizing profits

Fri. 4/3	More about firms maximizing profits
Mon. 4/6	Supply curve in a competitive market
Wed. 4/8	Equilibrium in a competitive market
Fri. 4/10	Review
<i>Sun. 4/12</i>	<i>Supplemental review session, 8pm to 9pm (on Zoom; link will be on Blackboard)</i>
Mon. 4/13	Midterm exam 3
Wed. 4/15	Monopoly
Fri. 4/17	Monopolistic competition and price discrimination
Mon. 4/20	Price discrimination
Wed. 4/22	Game theory
Fri. 4/24	Oligopoly
Mon. 4/27	Comparative advantage
Wed. 4/29	International trade
Fri. 5/1	Review
Thurs. 5/7	Final exam (2pm to 5pm in our regular classroom Washington Hall 201)

Instructor: Peter McHenry

I was born 50 miles away into a Navy family in Portsmouth, VA. I earned my BS in economics from Vanderbilt and my PhD in economics from Yale. My research is in labor, education, and health economics. I spend a lot of my time these days combing through data about physicians' services to patients. I'm also studying college enrollment decisions in the U.S. and Canada. I'm the chair of the Economics Department.

Principles of Microeconomics is my favorite college class. I want you to learn a lot of economics this semester. I welcome your questions and comments. My contact information is on the first page.

