Course Description:
This course is a first course in microeconomic analysis. While the material will be accessible to students with no economics background, we will cover some topics at the intermediate level. This course will develop a theoretical framework for analysis and apply this framework to real-world issues. We will examine the choices of both individuals and of firms in a variety of market environments. By the end of the course, students should (1) be familiar with the basic tools of microeconomic analysis, (2) have an understanding of their usefulness and limitations, and (3) have experience applying these tools to issues of public policy.

This course emphasizes the nature of decision-making by consumers, firms, and governments, and the effect of these decisions on the allocation of resources—land, labor and capital. A central issue is to establish the meaning of "efficiency" in resource allocation to establish a best-case scenario that can then be compared to a variety of policy options. We will investigate the conditions under which a market economy is able to secure an efficient allocation of society’s resources, and explore how the public sector has an important role to play in a market economy like that of the United States. We will study the ways in which private market failure exists, and the possible response of government to this failure.

A second basic issue is to understand how the income generated by the economy's use of resources is allocated among people—workers and capital owners; highly-skilled workers and unskilled workers; rich and poor. The questions here are ones of "equity," or inequality. The public sector also has a role in altering the nation’s income distribution.

A third objective is to assess the effectiveness of collective action--public policy--taken to improve economic efficiency and enhance equity. Having developed the analytical tools of microeconomics necessary to discuss efficiency and equity issues, we will apply them to a series of important contemporary public policy issues. Many of these issues involve public policy proposals, and our objective will be to understand how these proposals might affect the efficiency of the allocation of the nation's resources and equity or fairness in the distribution of income.

The course can roughly be thought of as having three segments. In the first segment, we will deal with the basic principles of consumer decision-making and the concepts of efficiency and equity, after which there will be a midterm examination. In the second section, we will work on the economics of production, costs, and different forms of market structure. The third segment focuses on specific topics the tools of applied microeconomics can be used to analyze.
Course Website: The course website can be found on Learn@UW (https://learnuw.wisc.edu/). The website includes links to the course syllabus (this document) and the readings (course e-reserves). Weekly problem sets, answer keys, supplementary readings, and other important information will also be posted on the website over the course of the semester. The course website shows the list of “News,” where the instructor will post important course-related announcements. The TA and the instructor will also be communicating with you through e-mail class lists, and these e-mails will often direct you to the course website.

Class Lecture Sessions: The class will meet two times per week, on Monday and Wednesday. On Monday and Wednesday, the class will meet jointly from 11:00AM to 12:15PM; Professor Fletcher will be conducting these sessions. All of the Monday and Wednesday sessions will involve formal presentations, but with questions and comments encouraged. This material will supplement the readings but will not be a substitute for them.

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<th>Joint</th>
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<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
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<td>11:00AM–12:15PM</td>
<td>594 Van Hise Hall</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Joint</td>
<td>11:00AM–12:15PM</td>
<td>594 Van Hise Hall</td>
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Discussion Sections: There are three discussion sections, and each student is assigned to one of these discussion sections. The TA, Vedant Bhatnagar, will be responsible for the discussion sections.

| DIS 301      | 4:30-5:20 PM | Wednesday | 150 Russell Lab |
| DIS 302      | 5:45-6:35 PM | Thursday  | 150 Russell Lab |
| DIS 303      | 9:05-9:55 AM | Friday    | 150 Russell Lab |

In the weekly discussion section, Vedant will go over the problem sets for the prior week, answer questions about the lectures during the previous week, and facilitate critical discussion of the course material. On some weeks, he will make a presentation on a topic that could not be covered in sufficient depth during the lectures. The separate discussion sections will be similar in format and content. Should conflicts arise during a particular week, students may substitute another discussion section for the one in which they are registered.

Examinations and Grading: There will be two midterm examinations and a final examination. The midterm examinations will be given during regularly scheduled class periods. The final examination will be given at the scheduled time during the final exam period or earlier (during the week of the university’s last class date). Each of the midterm exams will count for 25 percent of the course grade. The final exam will be comprehensive (i.e., cumulative), and will count for 40 percent of the course grade. Hence, the exams will count for a total of 90 percent of the final course grade. Your homework performance and participation in class and discussion section will account for the remainder (i.e., 10 percent) of the course grade.

Weekly Homework / Problem Sets: There will be a problem set posted on the class website by the ‘close of business’ each Wednesday. Students will complete the problem sets and hand them in at the lecture on the following Monday. This will allow four days for completing the assignment. The problem set handed in on Monday will be discussed in the discussion sections that week. While students are encouraged to discuss homework assignments with each other, the work turned in must be the student’s own work. Your assignment must be turned in in class and late homework will not be
accepted. The homework assignments will be ‘graded’ using simple check (√), check-minus (√–), and check-plus (√+) grades.

**Strong Recommendation:** In the past, students have found it very helpful to form study groups to work through these problems. The instructor can assist you in forming these groups.

**Class Participation:** Regular attendance at the two weekly lectures is essential to gain the full benefit from the course. Attendance at discussion sections is required. Questions and discussion in the lecture and discussion sections are an integral part of the course.

**Required Materials:**

1. The following book is a required textbook for the course:
   
   
   
   The 6th Edition is on reserve at the Social Science Library (8th floor)

2. In addition, you may consider subscribing to EconWeb, which is an on-line textbook. Problems, answers/applications website. The cost of signing up for the Intro Micro (economics) portion of web course is minimal. The registration website address is http://www.econweb.com/sub/IMicro.html. In addition, along with purchase of Perloff’s textbook, you obtain access to an on-line learning program entitled “My Econ Lab.” That program contains sample exams and other materials that you may find useful.

The reading assignments for each class meeting are shown on the attached class schedule (below). The readings are collected in folders at the Learn @UW class website.

**Related Readings:** Because we will be discussing many current issues and policies, students are expected to keep abreast of major developments in the economy as well as the emergence of new economic issues and policy proposals. The best way to follow these developments is by reading regularly *The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal,* or such business publications as *Business Week* and *The Economist.*


**A final note on the readings:** in general, I suggest prioritizing the text book, lecture notes, journal articles (especially toward the end of the semester) for proficiency in the topics/ideas. The Khan Academy videos are meant to help you if you are having trouble or would like another perspective on the basic concepts. The more popular readings (i.e. Slate articles) are meant to further tie the concepts to real world and interesting applications, but some students feel bogged down when doing all the readings each week, so it is fine to skim the popular readings.

**Instructor Office Hours:**

Jason Fletcher	Monday	1:45-3:15 PM or by Appt	Office: 4430 Social Science
Vedant Bhatnagar	Friday	10:15-11:15 AM or by Appt	Office: Bascom 401B
Concerns about the Course: If you have a concern about the course, please bring it to the attention of the instructor or TA. If you have a concern about the grade you receive on a homework assignment or an examination, first talk to your TA, Vedant Bhatnagar. If you believe you still have a legitimate concern that has not been addressed, please provide Professor Fletcher with a written explanation of your concern. The instructor will review the materials and will be in touch with you.

1. September 2:
   Introduction to the Course: The Economic Problem: Production Possibilities, Concept of Tradeoffs
   Landsburg, SE. “Do the Poor Deserve Life Support.” Slate 2006
   Barro: “Pleading the Case”.


   **Big Idea:** Opportunity Costs

September 7: No Class (Labor Day)

2. September 9
   Marginal Analysis, Supply, Demand, and Market Equilibrium.
   Perloff, Chs. 1 & 2;
   Landsburg, SE. “Giving Your All.” Slate 1997
   Economist, Proof that you should get a life, December 2014

   **Big Idea:** Marginal Analysis, Sunk Costs

   Khan: [https://www.khanacademy.org/economics-finance-domain/microeconomics/supply-demand-equilibrium](https://www.khanacademy.org/economics-finance-domain/microeconomics/supply-demand-equilibrium)

   Week 2 EconWeb Optional Assignment:

   Work through EconWeb (Micro): Intro (all parts); Demand & Supply (all parts)

   Week 2 EconWeb Current Events Assignments:
   [Law School Applications Increase](#)
   [Cheap Flights to Europe](#)

3. September 14
   Shifts in Supply and Demand; Government Market Interventions (Quotas, Price Floors and Ceilings);

   Perloff, Ch. 3, pp. 43-56;
   Greg Mankiw, “A Veto Threat,”
Hugh Rockoff, “Price Controls,”
Slate, Legalized Prostitution Economist, The baseball-card bubble, December 2014


4. September 16
the Shapes of the S and D curves; Elasticity; why it matters
Perloff, Ch. 3, pp. 58-68
Grim, R. “Who’s Got the Acid?” Slate, 2004

Khan: https://www.khanacademy.org/economics-finance-domain/microeconomics/elasticity-tutorial

Case Study: Price Elasticity, Co-pays, and medical care

Week 3 EconWeb Assignment:
Work though EconWeb: and Elasticity (all parts)

Week 3 EconWeb Current Events Assignments:
Surf Inspired Fashions
Increasing Demand for Mansions
U.S. Energy
Drug Bust

5. September 21
Concepts of Economic Surplus, Price Floor and Ceiling; Rent Control and Minimum Wages

Perloff, Ch. 9, pp. 267-295
“Is Santa a Deadweight Loss?” The Economist, 2001
Economist, Why some economists oppose minimum wages, January 2014

Case Study: Minimum Wages

***No Office Hours September 21***

6. September 23
The Market and Welfare Effects of Sales/Unit Taxes and Subsidies
Some Applications of Consumer Theory: In-kind Transfers, School Vouchers, Excise Subsidies, Paying
for Trash; Evaluating government policies: Surpluses and Shortages

Chapter 5, sections 5.1 (Excise Subsidies, Health Care and Consumer Welfare), 5.2 (Public Schools and the Voucher Proposal), and 5.3 (Paying for Garbage), from Edgar Browning and Mark Zupan, Microeconomics: Theory and Application, Wiley, 2002, pp. 118-128.

Alcohol and Cigarette Taxes JEP article (recommended)
Friedman, D. Hidden Order: The Economics of Everyday Life. Chapter 4: What would you give to get off a desert island? (skim)
Friedman, D. Hidden Order: The Economics of Everyday Life. Chapter 7: Putting It Together (skim)

Khan: https://www.khanacademy.org/economics-finance-domain/microeconomics/consumer-producer-surplus

Big Idea: Incidence

Week 4 EconWeb Assignment:
Work through EconWeb: Consumer Choice: Surplus, Taxation

Week 4 EconWeb Current Events Assignments:
French Food Taxes
Cigarette Tax Hikes

7. September 28
Externalities and Public goods

Perloff, Ch. 18;
Landsburg, S. “Property is Theft.” Slate 1997
Landsburg, SE. “No Parking Anytime.” Slate 2007
NY Times, The Inevitable, Indispensable Property Tax, July 2015

Khan: https://www.khanacademy.org/economics-finance-domain/microeconomics/consumer-producer-surplus/externalities-topic/v/negative-externalities

Additional Reading
Gruber, J. “The Economics of Tobacco Regulation.” Health Affairs, 2002 Vol 21(2).

Case Study: Soda Taxation

8. September 30
Cost-Benefit Analysis, Discounting, and Present Value;
Perloff, Ch. 16
“The Price of Prudence.” The Economist, 2004
Brennan, “Discounting the Future: Economics and Ethics”

Week 5 EconWeb Current Events Assignment:
U.S. Federal Minimum Wage May Increase

9. October 5
   Cost-Benefit Analysis and Policy Issues

   The Contingent Value Debate
   Problems with Contingent Valuation (from dubious to hopeless)
   NY Times: New Calculation of Smoking

   Case Study: Value of a Statistical Life, BP Oil Spill, Contingent Value

10. October 7 (MIDTERM 1)

11. October 12
    From Inputs to Outputs to Costs to Supply: the Short-run Supply Curve of a Firm
    Perloff, Ch. 7, Ch. 8, pp. 237-253;
    Barro, R. "Attention Consumers: Creativity Never Comes Cheap." Business Week, 2000


    Week 7 EconWeb Assignment:
    Work through EconWeb: Production Costs (all parts); and Perfect Competition (all parts).
    [Note: The cost concepts/curves on which you should focus are marginal cost (MC) and average total cost (ATC). In going through Production Costs, parts 8 through 11 may be a bit confusing, but keep your eye on MC and ATC.]

    Week 7 EconWeb Current Events Assignments:
    Rising Ice Cream Production Costs

12. October 14
    Perfect Competition in the Short- and Long-run; the Process of 'General Equilibration'
    Perloff, Ch. 8, pp. 220-236; and Ch. 9, pp. 262-266;
    Chapter 10, sections 10.3 (Airline Regulation and Deregulation) and 10.4 (City Taxicab Markets), from Edgar Browning and Mark Zupan, Microeconomics: Theory and Application, Wiley, 2002, pp. 274-282.


13. October 19
Monopoly
Perloff, Ch. 11 (through p 373)
Friedman, D. Hidden Order: The Economics of Everyday Life. Chapter 10: Monopoly for Fun and Profit
Becker, G. “Cracking the Genetic Code: Competition was the Catalyst.” Business Week, 2000

14. October 21
Natural Monopoly and Price Regulations. Price Discrimination, Oligopoly
Perloff, Ch. 13 (through p. 456, skim the rest)

Week 8 EconWeb Assignment:
Work through EconWeb: Monopoly (all parts); Industry Policy (all parts).

Week 8 EconWeb Current Events Assignments:
Heat Based Vending Machine Prices
College Texts cheaper outside US
Diamond Monopolist Changes Century Old Strategy
Microsoft Anti Trust Case

15. October 26
Game Theory/Strategy
Perloff, Ch 14. (through p 477, skim the rest if interested)
Friedman, D. Hidden Order: The Economics of Everyday Life. Chap 11, “Hard Problems: Game Theory, Strategic Behavior and Oligopoly”
“Pricking Consciences.” The Economist, 2007
Khan: https://www.khanacademy.org/economics-finance-domain/microeconomics/nash-equilibrium-tutorial

16. October 28
Cartels, More Oligopoly

Case Study: NCAA

17. November 2
Risk and Expected Value
Perloff, Ch. 17
Fisman, R. “The Bad Economics of Switching Health Care Plans.” Slate

18. November 4
Adverse Selection, Moral Hazard, Lemons

Perloff, Ch. 19 (through p. 637), Ch. 20 (skim)
Kuttner, R. “How to Undermine an Ownership Society.” Business Week, 2004
Landsburg, SE. The Armchair Economist. Chapter 3: Truth or Consequences
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pmolioUklXI

19. November 9 (MIDTERM 2)

20. November 11: No Class Meeting

*Final Topics Module:* International Trade, Education, Environmental Policies, Labor Market Outcomes

21. November 16
Policies toward Environmental Pollution: Emissions Charges and Tradable Permits
Perloff, Ch. 18, pp. 605-622;

22. November 18 --Economic Evaluation of Policy (Soda Tax)/Minimum Wage

Journal of Policy Analysis and Management Point/Counterpoint articles for Soda Tax and Minimum Wage

Supplemental for Soda Tax
http://www.wpr.org/listen/702026

23. November 23
Economics of Higher Education
Perloff Chapter 19 (p 638-646)
Payback Website

Big Idea: Signaling and Investments of Human Capital

24. **November 25: No Class Meeting**

25. November 30
   Discussion of the ACA
   Gruber:
   [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pmolioUkIXI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pmolioUkIXI)
   [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0gOkz_vEFQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0gOkz_vEFQ)
   [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AqHz2XcUGok](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AqHz2XcUGok)
   APPAM
   [https://vts.inxpo.com/scripts/Server.nxp?LASCmd=L:0&AI=1&ShowKey=22234&LoginType=0&InitialDisplay=1&ClientBrowser=0&DisplayItem=NULL&LangLocaleID=0](https://vts.inxpo.com/scripts/Server.nxp?LASCmd=L:0&AI=1&ShowKey=22234&LoginType=0&InitialDisplay=1&ClientBrowser=0&DisplayItem=NULL&LangLocaleID=0)

   **Readings TBD**
   NY Times, How Medical Care Is Being Corrupted, November 2014

26. December 2 (**Vedant Lecture**)
   International Trade in the Partial Equilibrium Framework: Gains from Trade, Welfare Effects of Tariffs, Quotas, and Import Controls, Two country welfare analysis
   Perloff, Ch. 9, (p. 295-end of chapter);
   The Doha Round...and Round...and Round,” *The Economist*, July 31, 2008.

   **Big Idea:** Comparative Advantage

27. December 7
Inequality


28. December 9 (Vedant Lecture II, Topic TBA)

29. December 14
Applying Concepts to Policy Analysis


Alan Krueger thoughts on the intersection of economics and policy
https://youtu.be/wEMA9zgXy80
https://youtu.be/VnWsZQXsMiU

FINAL EXAM: TBD