

Colby College
Department of Economics

EC133: Principles of Microeconomics Fall 2020

Section C: MW 1-2:15pm Diamond 142 (Ostrove Auditorium)

Section D: MW 2:30-3:45pm Diamond 141

Professor: Jennifer Meredith jennifer.meredith@colby.edu (include "[EC133]" in subject)
Office: Zoom! (Diamond 370 in pre-pandemic times) Phone: 859-5246 with voicemail

One-on-One Zoom Office Hours: Wednesdays 4-5pm & Thursdays 1-2pm*

Please book one-on-one appointments on [calendly](#) at least two hours in advance

Group Zoom Office Hours: Thursdays 3:30-5pm*

These sessions will be recorded for the benefit of students unable to attend

**Please note that these office hours are tentative and subject to change depending on the local school schedule.*

My preferred mode of communication is during office hours or via email.

Teaching Assistants: Libby Mensch (elmens23@colby.edu), Ben Plevin (beplev22@colby.edu), and
Kat Specht (kcspec22@colby.edu)

TA Hours: 5:30-7pm on Zoom and 7-9pm in-person (Diamond 122)

Course Description:

Microeconomics studies how individuals and firms allocate limited resources to satisfy unlimited needs and wants. This course initially focuses on how competitive markets allocate these scarce resources and then shifts to examining when markets fail to operate efficiently. After analyzing costs, students look at how firms in market structures ranging from perfectly competitive to monopolistic make decisions. Since many markets are not perfect, we will also study environmental externalities, imperfect information, and risk. Students will use standard economic models to describe market structures and the effects of policy interventions, solve problems using graphical or algebraic models of these markets, and choose an appropriate model to analyze current events.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Students will internalize the fundamental concepts of microeconomics until they are capable of intuitively paraphrasing and creatively applying these terms.
Students will state the predictions of economic theory in their own words and link them to their own lives. Why? This is how the theory infuses our daily thinking so we retain it and build on it later. This is how economics is integrated into our understanding of the world.
2. Students will draw and manipulate graphs to predict the economic consequences of current events.
We will learn to limit our thinking to two dimensions and value these tools that help us see into the future. Why? Boiling down the complexity of the human experience to a set of lines feels counterintuitive at first but is key to how economists interpret the world. Once a simple graph is mastered, it is easy to apply to many contexts and sets a foundation for more intricate models of human interaction.

3. Students will recognize the contexts where competitive market assumptions are likely to fail and discuss how likely this is in reality.

Students will interrogate the assumptions of economic models. Why? In order to question assumptions you must first establish a deep understanding of the standard model. Modern economists are constantly reinventing the field to reflect reality and incorporate increasingly diverse perspectives. Market friction is more common and more interesting than market perfection.

4. Students will advocate for policies that balance equity and efficiency as they take positions in contemporary economic debates.

Students will critique the strengths and shortcomings of economic thinking as they constantly weigh the tradeoffs between policies. Why? Increasingly, economists are coming to recognize the ways in which the field has struggled to quantify fairness. Economics is not black and white. Being able to explain the pros and cons of policies, understand the economic data needed to inform policy makers, and thrive amidst the uncertainty of ambiguous solutions is key to being a modern citizen.

Hybrid Course Structure

In Fall 2020 this course will be taught as a hybrid course that combines online and in-person elements.

There is a lot going on this semester! Each week I will post an outline to Moodle with links to the videos, remote sessions, assignments, and other resources for the week. I will also give you an idea of the optimal timeline to complete the work for each week. Please take advantage of these weekly outlines and refer to them first before coming to me with a question about logistics.

➤ Asynchronous recorded lectures available online

- Posted on Moodle (by Sunday at the latest) each week
- Several short (10-15 minute) videos with embedded self-grading quizzes
- Videos will be clearly marked for either Monday's or Wednesday's class
- While videos can be viewed at your own convenience, the expectation is that they will be viewed and quizzing will be completed prior to Monday and Wednesday class. Incentives: participation grade depends on timely viewing, each class specific students will be responsible for arriving at class prepared with clarifying questions, and class time will be devoted to interactive small group work that relies on prior preparation.
- Videos will only be useful tools if you take notes, draw the graphs alongside me, respond to the built in questions and generally treat them as you would an in-person lecture. Of course, an added perk is the ability to pause the instructor at will and review whenever helpful.

➤ MONDAYS: Synchronous remote sessions

- Beginning Monday, August 31st
- We will meet on Zoom as an entire class for the full 75 minute class time.
- The purpose of these Monday meetings will be to:
 - Ask clarifying questions from the video lectures
 - Watch the instructor do some spontaneous examples
 - Use breakout rooms to start problem sets in groups
 - Real time troubleshoot problem areas in the examples
- Given the difficulties of doing interactive group work with physical distancing and masks, I have decided to start the semester with the plan of doing Mondays on Zoom. After a few weeks I will reassess given a survey of students and the evolving public health situation on campus.

➤ **WEDNESDAYS: Synchronous in-person* sessions**

- Beginning Wednesday, September 2nd
- You will attend in-person class once a week for 30 minutes. The class will be broken into two halves and only one half of the class will be present at a time. This will facilitate a more intimate problem-solving environment and increase physical distancing in the classroom. You will always attend the same 30 minute block (see group assignment on Moodle).
- As long as you are healthy and in compliance with campus COVID health protocols, I will expect your attendance at in-person sessions. Do not come to class if you are experiencing symptoms associated with COVID or have been exposed to someone who has tested positive for COVID.
- If your personal health situation prevents in-person attendance then I will work with you on an individual basis to provide alternate ways to receive participation credit for in-person meetings.
- The purpose of these Wednesday meetings will be to:
 - Play interactive games
 - Continue group work on problem set or practice exam
 - Smaller group discussions

**Please note that circumstances may require these in-person Wednesday sessions to move online. These circumstances include cancellation of classes by the College, my personal circumstances (e.g. quarantine, local school closures) or other class circumstances (large numbers of students in isolation).*

➤ **Online Zoom Office Hours**

- In line with the recommendation of the Economics Department and College, I will not be available for in-person meetings with students outside of class time.
- One-on-One Zoom Office Hours: Wednesdays 4-5pm & Thursdays 1-2pm**
Please book one-on-one appointments on [calendly](#) at least two hours in advance
- Group drop-in Zoom Office Hours: Thursdays 3:30-5pm**
These sessions will be recorded for the benefit of students unable to attend

***Please note that these office hours are tentative and subject to change depending on the local school schedule.*

Course Materials

- **(OPTIONAL) TEXTBOOK:** Microeconomics, 2nd Edition, by Dean Karlan and Jonathan Morduch, 2017. Buying the textbook is **NOT** mandatory, see Welcome Letter on email or Moodle. All students are encouraged to try the free 2 week trial of the Ebook, consider their individual learning styles, and determine whether having access to the text is necessary given the flipped nature of the course.
- **CONNECT (Optional):** Online practice problems available at this website: <https://connect.mheducation.com/class/j-meredith-fall-2020-mw> See email/Moodle for registration instructions. Following a trial period, interested students must purchase access.
- **MobLab:** See email/Moodle for instructions. All students are required to purchase access at www.moblab.com and input the Class Code: **5pfaae4w3**. This will allow us to play many interactive games together in person that will reinforce the course material, harness some real world market imperfections, and be a lot of fun.
- **MOODLE:** The course Moodle site will be used for course announcements, to post course materials, to post quiz and exam grades, and also gives you the option of sending messages to classmates.
- **EMAIL:** check Moodle and your Colby account daily for messages from me about the class. I will only use your Colby email address as listed in my instructor database.
- **ACCESS TO CURRENT NEWS ARTICLES:** *The Wall Street Journal, The Economist, The Financial Times, The New York Times, Business Week*, etc. Please use the Colby Library website to stay up to date on current economic events since we will occasionally be using news articles in class and in assignments.

Crucial Class Policies *(see detailed policies below)*:

- Late work will not be accepted.
- If offered, extra credit opportunities will be only be granted to the class as whole and individual opportunities will not be made available to students unhappy with their performance in hindsight.
- Exams must be taken at the posted date and time. The exam schedule is firm. Accommodations for an alternative testing date/time will only be considered
 - 1) if the request is made within the first two weeks of the semester OR
 - 2) with an accompanying dean's note if extenuating circumstances arise.
- Allow me 24 hours to reply to e-mail inquiries on weekdays (please include [EC133] in subject line) and additional time on weekends.

Take-Home Exam Schedule:

- Exam 1: Any 3 hour block between **Thursday, Sept. 24th 6am and Friday, Sept. 25th 5pm**
- Exam 2: Any 3 hour block between **Thursday, Oct. 29th 6am and Friday, Oct. 30th 5pm**
- Final Exam: **Saturday, December 5th 6-9pm**

*While you are able to take the exam remotely at a time that works for you in this block, these exam times still extend beyond the regular class time. Make a note!

Words of Advice

Whether they know it or not, everyone is an economist. Economics is merely the study of how humans make decisions with varying degrees of rationality. The process of analyzing economic trade-offs draws upon both sides of our brain and integrates our ethical framework. Making simplifying assumptions and using economic models as a frame for our discussions allows us to focus on the pared down essentials of most political debates and business decisions. I hope that you will enjoy learning the economic tools that will allow you to reinterpret the world surrounding you and identify the hidden costs and trade-offs that confront societies and individuals. That said, learning economics for the first (or even the second or third time) can be tricky because it involves reorienting yourself to a new, and probably foreign, way of thinking. Drawing on my years of studying and teaching in the field, I would like to suggest some strategies that I have found to be helpful:

- Do not get discouraged, often there is a moment when things “click” into place.
- Do not fall behind, come and ask for help sooner rather than later.
- Do not be afraid to ask for help. I am at Colby for a reason and that is because I genuinely enjoy teaching students, especially one on one. Come to office hours, please!
- Do not be afraid to ask questions. I can guarantee that you are not the only one lost. You will deepen the level of discussion in class and your classmates will thank you.
- Do not be turned off by the math. In our modern and competitive world, you will be rewarded for gaining quantitative skills and you will be surprised what a great signal your economics grades are.
- Do not neglect your verbal and written communication skills. Economics rewards those who can think profoundly and express themselves concisely.
- Work together. Even if you are always ahead of your study group in comprehension, you will gain a deeper level of understanding by explaining these concepts to others.
- Practice, practice, practice. Doing as many example problems as you can is the proven way to succeed in an economics course. When you are done with a problem try to look at it again and think through what would happen if things shifted in the opposite direction.
- Prepare yourself for class. Read the assigned material, review your notes, and prepare any questions or comments from prior materials.

Grading:

- **Problem Sets (30%)** You will have weekly written homework assignments that will involve graphs, short analysis, and applications to current events.
 - Problem sets will be assigned by Friday and will be due the following Friday (unless an alternate due date is announced in class or on Moodle).
 - You will start work on the problem sets during group work in class on Mondays and Wednesdays.
 - Late homework will not be accepted but I will drop your lowest homework grade.
 - You are encouraged to work collaboratively on problem sets but each student must turn in their own solutions for submission. Examples that you use on the problem sets must be your own.
 - Any submissions that the TAs and I find have plagiarized past answer keys will be taken seriously as violations of Colby's Academic Integrity policy.
- **Take-Home Exams (20% each x 3=60% total)** Exams will consist of short essays and application problems. The exams are based on the videos, material covered in class, and problems from the homework. The two midterms are not cumulative but the final is.
 - You are not allowed to work collaboratively on the take-home exams. The exams will emphasize creative application of course concepts in your own words.
 - Students will have a 3 hour window to complete the exams at any point between the Thursday morning when they are posted and the Friday afternoon when they are due.
 - Prior to each midterm I will assign a practice exam that you will complete in groups and we will discuss the answers together in class. Each group will be responsible for submitting a subset of practice exam problems that I will grade and will become the class' practice midterm score.
- **Participation (10%)** You will have in class group assignments that will serve as my measure of your engagement and preparation for class. These will be completed on Google Docs or on the whiteboard and graded for completion. Failure to actively participate during group work, lecture, and practice exam sessions will harm your participation grade. Insightful questions and comments that demonstrate you have completed the videos ahead of time and are ready to examine the material at a deeper level will boost your participation grade.
 - Self-Assessed Participation Grade is 5% of overall grade
 - Professor-Assessed Participation Grade is 5% of overall grade

We will collaborate on a more detailed rubric as we envision what active participation looks like in a hybrid context. You will be assessing your own participation alongside me so that you take an active role in considering your engagement in this course.

Participation Rubric- A collaborative contract between all participants

THIS YEAR:

Score	<i>Last Year's Rubric for in-person participation</i>	Video Lectures	Mondays on Zoom	Wednesdays in-person
5 (100%)	<i>Effective leadership in advancing thoughtful class discussion and promoting deep learning. It is evident that the student has come to class prepared and completed the assigned reading. When asked to work in teams, student always contributes and takes a leadership role in explaining the work of the team to the larger class. OR Student's written groupwork reflects a deep engagement with the material, original thinking, and/ or prior preparation for class.</i>	All videos viewed and quizzes completed prior to class. Excellent open-ended video quiz answer used in class.	Attend all Zoom sessions with video on. Consistent contributions to Zoom chat. Plus one of the following: Come prepared with excellent clarifying questions when assigned. Leader in presenting work of breakout room to class.	Attend all in-person meetings when physically able. Consistent contributions to whole class discussion. Plus one of the following: Come prepared with excellent clarifying questions when assigned. Win an interactive game. Leader in presenting work of group to the class.
4 (80%)	<i>The student speaks aloud in class, whether to their team or to the larger group. When working in teams the student always contributes to the discussion.</i>	All videos viewed and quizzes completed prior to class.	Attend all Zoom sessions with video on. Google doc demonstrates consistent and helpful contributions to group work even if never speak in larger class. Sometimes contribute to Zoom chat.	Attend all in-person meetings when physically able. Consistent contributions to small group discussion. Sometimes contribute to larger class discussion.
3 (60%)	<i>Mere attendance. Student is present in class. Student cooperates when asked to work in teams but does not contribute or speak to their teammates.</i>	All videos viewed and quizzes completed by end of week.	Attend most Zoom sessions with video on. Not prepared for group work. Never contribute to Google doc.	Attend most in-person meetings when physically able. Not prepared for group work. Very infrequent contribution to discussion (small or large).
2 (40%)	<i>Student is absent but provides professor with a doctor's note or other valid documentation of the reason for their absence.</i>	Misses videos for the week. Makes them up by the exam.	Miss more than 2 Zoom sessions. Absent or non-responsive for majority of group work.	Miss more than 2 in-person sessions without making arrangements to make up the work.
1 (20%)	<i>Student is absent but informs professor ahead of time as stated in class policies. (No need for TMI medical excuses please!)</i>	Misses videos for the week. Makes them up by end of semester.	Miss more than 3 Zoom sessions. Absent or non-responsive for almost all group work.	Miss more than 3 in-person sessions without making arrangements to make up the work.
0 (0%)	<i>Student is absent but does not inform professor ahead of time. Student is present but exhibits disengaged/ distracting/ unprofessional behavior including side conversations, sleeping, or otherwise disrespecting others. Student does not cooperate when asked to work in teams.</i>	Misses videos for the week. Never makes them up.	Miss more than 4 Zoom sessions. Absent or non-responsive for almost all group work.	Miss more than 4 in-person sessions without making arrangements to make up the work.

Detailed Class Policies (the fine print):

1. **Class attendance** is expected of course, since exam questions will cover both textbook and classroom material, it will be to your advantage to attend; not to mention that learning is an active process. I look forward to intelligent questions and good discussion. Class sessions will also involve problem-solving sessions, exercises and discussions. **You will be held responsible for all readings, assignments, and announcements discussed in class.** Be punctual so there is no delay or interruption in beginning each of our brief sessions. Please do not leave the classroom during lecture unless there is an emergency as this is disruptive to the instructor and to your peers.
2. **Use of electronics in class:** I discourage the use of smartphones and laptops unless they are being used for group work or interactive games. It is distracting for those around you (Sana et al., 2013), for lecturers, and can be distracting for you. There is also empirical evidence that students learn better and remember more by taking notes by hand (Mueller & Oppenheimer, 2014). Please see me if you have concerns about this and I will work with you to support your learning needs.
3. **Email Policy:** Subject of the email **MUST** contain [EC133]. A proper heading in the subject line will ensure that your message receives priority in a full inbox. In addition, the email must contain a proper address to the reader, and the first sentence should state what resources you have already used in your attempt to find the information you are soliciting. (The first sentence of the email tells me where you tried to find the answer on your own.)
4. **Revisions to the course:** The outline below is a suggested guide, we may move faster or slower depending upon professor preferences, and capabilities of the class.
5. **Academic Integrity:** Honesty, integrity, and personal responsibility are cornerstones of a Colby education and provide the foundation for scholarly inquiry, intellectual discourse, and an open and welcoming campus community. These values are articulated in the Colby Affirmation and are central to this course. You are expected to demonstrate academic honesty in all aspects of this course. If you understand our course expectations, give credit to those whose work you rely on, and submit your best work, you are highly unlikely to commit an act of academic dishonesty.
Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to: violating clearly stated rules for taking an exam or completing homework; plagiarism (including material from sources without a citation and quotation marks around any borrowed words); claiming another's work or a modification of another's work as one's own; buying or attempting to buy papers or projects for a course; fabricating information or citations; knowingly assisting others in acts of academic dishonesty; misrepresentations to faculty within the context of a course; and submitting the same work, including an essay that you wrote, in more than one course without the permission of the instructors.
Academic dishonesty is a serious offense against the college. **Sanctions for academic dishonesty are assigned by an academic review board and may include:** failure on the assignment, failure in the course, or suspension or expulsion from the College.
For more on recognizing and avoiding plagiarism, see: libguides.colby.edu/avoidingplagiarism
For resources and information on academic integrity, see: www.colby.edu/academicintegrity
6. **Make-up Exams:** Except for abrupt/severe illness or another serious unexpected happening, there will not be any kind of make-up exams. If you are not able to make it to an exam for an unforeseen reason, you must contact me on the same day with an explanation. In any case you will have to show valid documentation as soon as possible after the missed exam and obtain an accompanying dean's note.

7. **Economics Department Exam Policy:** The Economics department adopts a no bathroom, no cell phone policy for exams. Students will not have cell phones on their person or use any electronic device other than approved calculators during an exam. Students will not leave the room during an exam without permission of the instructor. If a student must leave the room, they must show the instructor that they are not taking an electronic device with them.
8. **Tutors:** If you would like additional help outside of office hours and TA sessions, please contact me because advanced students are available as tutors for hire and I would be happy to supply you with a list of names.
9. **Academic Accommodations:** I will happily provide learning and testing accommodations as specified within letters provided by Kate McLaughlin in the Dean of Studies Office. Please meet with me within two weeks of the start of the semester to make a request for accommodations so that we can work together with the College to make the appropriate arrangements for you. Kate McLaughlin, Associate Director of Access and Disability Services (kmclaugh@colby.edu) is the primary contact for accommodations and any questions related to educational testing and documentation.
10. **Mental Health:** I care about my students' well-being and understand they may face mental health challenges. Students are encouraged to seek support from the College's available resources, including your advising dean and Counseling Services. (For immediate care, please call 207-859-4490 and press "0" to reach the on-call counselor.) I am willing to discuss reasonable accommodations during a crisis, but to fulfill our educational mission, students are expected to adhere to the attendance policy. Failure to do so because of mental health challenges may require consultation with the Dean of Studies Office.
11. **Respect for Diversity:** It is my intent that students from diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well-served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength and benefit. I expect you to feel challenged and sometimes outside of your comfort zone in this course, but it is my intent to present materials and activities that are inclusive and respectful of all persons, no matter their gender, sexual orientation, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, culture, perspective, and other background characteristics. I have attempted to avoid scheduling exams during major religious holidays. If, however, I have inadvertently scheduled an exam or major deadline that creates a conflict with your religious observances, please let me know within two weeks of the start of classes so that we can make other arrangements. Colby College is supportive of the religious practices of its students, faculty, and staff. Class rosters are provided to each instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name and/or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records.
12. **Sexual Misconduct/Title IX Statement:** Colby College prohibits and will not tolerate sexual misconduct or gender-based discrimination of any kind. Colby is legally obligated to investigate sexual misconduct (including, but not limited to, sexual assault and sexual harassment) and other specific forms of behavior that violate federal and state laws (Title IX and Title VII, and the Maine Human Rights Act). Such behavior also requires the College to fulfill certain obligations under two other federal laws, the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and the Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Statistics Act (Clery Act).
To learn more about what constitutes sexual misconduct or to report an incident, see:
www.colby.edu/studentlife/handbook-section/f-sexualmisconduct/.

If you wish to speak confidentially about an incident of sexual misconduct, you may contact:

- Counseling Center: 207-859-4490

- Emily Schusterbauer, Director Gender and Sexual Diversity Program (eeschust@colby.edu; 207-859-4093)
- Office of Religious & Spiritual Life: 207-859-4272
 - o Dean of Religious & Spiritual Life, Kate Smanik (kate.smanik@colby.edu)
 - o Jewish Chaplain, Rachel Isaacs (Rachel.isaacs@colby.edu)
 - o Catholic Campus Minister, Charles Demm (cademm@colby.edu)

Students should be aware that faculty members are considered "responsible employees"; as such, if you disclose an incident of sexual misconduct to a faculty member, they have an obligation to report it to Meg Hatch, Eustis 210A, 207-859-4266, titleix@colby.edu, Colby's Title IX Coordinator. "Disclosure" may include communication in-person, via email/phone/text, or through class assignments.

Tentative Course Schedule:

Again, while the chapters from the textbook are listed, students are encouraged to spend the first two weeks assessing whether the videos posted make the textbook readings unnecessary.

***This outline does not include Problem Set Due Dates. In general, Problem Sets will be due on the Friday after they are assigned but pay close attention to the posted deadline on Moodle and to in class announcements.**

Week 1: August 26

- Introduction
- Reading: Syllabus and Chapter 1

Week 2: August 31 & September 2

- Consumer Behavior and Supply/Demand
- Reading: Chapters 7 & 3
- *Problem Set 1 Assigned*

Week 3: September 7 & 9

- Elasticity
- Reading: Chapter 4
- *Problem Set 2 Assigned*

Week 4: September 14 & 16

- Efficiency & Government Intervention
- Reading: Chapters 5 & 6
- *Practice Exam 1 Assigned*

Week 5: September 21 & 23

- Finish Government Intervention and Review for Exam 1
- In-class discussion of Practice Exam 1 on Wednesday
- ***Take-Home Exam 1 Due Friday, September 25th by 4pm (Covers Weeks 1-5)***

Week 6: September 28 & 30

- Irrationality & Information
- Reading: Chapters 8 & 10

Week 7: October 5 & 7

- The Costs of Production
- Reading: Chapter 12
- *Problem Set 3 Assigned*

Week 8: October 14

NO CLASS MONDAY, October 12th Fall Recess

- Perfect Competition
- Reading: Chapter 13
- *Problem Set 4 Assigned*

Week 9: October 19 & 21

- Monopoly
- Reading: Chapter 14

Week 10: October 26 & 28

- Monopoly Regulation and Price Discrimination
- In-class discussion of Practice Exam 2 on Wednesday
- *Take-Home Exam 2 Due Friday, October 30th by 4pm (Covers Weeks 6-10)*

Week 11: November 2 & 4

- Monopolistic Competition and Oligopoly
- Reading: Chapter 15
- *Problem Set 6 Assigned*

Week 12: November 9 & 11

- Game Theory and Oligopoly Continued
- Reading: Chapter 9
- *Problem Set 7 Assigned*

Week 13: November 16 & 18

- Externalities and Public Goods
- Reading: Chapters 18 & 19

Week 14: November 23

- Review for Final Exam

Take-Home Final Exam: Saturday, December 5th 6-9pm