

College Course Evaluations

ECON 20710: Introductory Game Theory

Section 01 - Autumn 2013

Instructor(s): Sonnenschein Hugo F

Number Enrolled: 30

Number of Responses: 15

Evaluation Comments

What were the instructor's strengths? Weaknesses?

- Professor Sonnenschein is a great person. He loves teaching and gives good motivating examples for the class. Unfortunately, the intricacies of the theory weren't given the appropriate exposition at times. Definitions were glossed over, and elementary proofs were either incomplete or took too much time to prove.
- Strengths: entertaining, really understands the material, really loves the material. Weaknesses: wanders, gets on tangents, often goes through obvious material at a very slow pace and then quickly skims past difficult material at the end of class when time expires.
- Professor Sonnenschein is an incredible professor and a great lecturer. He's very supportive of students and cares about the material (and knows it really well).
- Strengths: Interesting person, know the material well, very likable, cared about his students Weaknesses: Occasionally disorganized
- Professor Sonnenschein really cares about his students and is very knowledgeable about game theory. He encourages us to think about the material independently and to ask questions in class. I also like that he calls on people to answer questions - forces you to stay alert and to be engaged in the lectures. I think he could do a better job of organizing the course though, as well as in more clearly defining some of the concepts toward the end.
- He knew his stuff but his lectures were quite dry and repetitive for the first few weeks
- Sonnenschein is the best game theory microeconomics lecturer I have had at this school. His (perceived) weaknesses are that he is prone to over-explaining concepts, but this may not necessarily be a bad thing.
- Sonnenschein knows the material, knows the issues and the caveats with the material, and knows the conversation around the material. He's very careful and thoughtful about his teaching, and he really makes an effort to get to know his class.
- Professor Sonnenschein is an expert in this subject, and his attempts during lectures in point out developments in the field and inspire in us the culture of its practitioners were not unnoticed. He is very approachable and helpful. However, sometimes the lectures were slow and omitted a lot of the material that we were expected to learn. Also, Professor Sonnenschein is very busy with things outside of the course, so email him if you want to meet with him.
- Sonneschein was extremely nice and cared a lot about his students. He had a party.
- Professor Sonnenschein was very nice and helpful. However, he moved the lectures at an excruciatingly slow pace. This often meant that while little new material was presented each class, it was always arrived at at the end, with the result that he never seemed quite finished. I could have sworn for the first 2 weeks that the first hour of the lecture was the same every day.
- Prof. Sonnenschein is a very down-to-earth, sweet, encouraging instructor whose genuine interest in the topic and how sufficiently he presents material to the class is constantly visible. Any difficulty I had with the course I attributed not to his instructions nor the design of the course, but rather to my own shortcomings relative to the average intelligence of my peers.
- Sonnenschein is a very nice man. He really wants the best for his students and is truly out there to make sure they learn as much as possible about Game Theory. He wants to present the material at a rigorous level, but isn't interested in dooming people's GPAs. However, he has a tendency to ramble and sometimes goes way off-track explaining the most basic of things. Nothing that couldn't be fixed by reading the book. Also he threw a dope party.

What were the teaching assistant's or writing intern's strengths? Weaknesses?

- Raluca and Martin were sometimes helpful during problem session, but they could have benefited from more preparation. Most of the time it was an 80/20 split between a good complete exposition of a problem solution or a sluggish attempt at a solution.
- Strengths: none. Weaknesses: unclear, unclear grader, presented INCORRECT answers on the board MULTIPLE TIMES, lectures were unhelpful and useless (Raluca + Martin). Martin could also be very condescending and rude. I liked Hanzhe, though.
- Martin gave clear TA sessions and lectures. While Raluca and Hanzhe meant well, they were generally not very helpful and their TA sessions/lecturers were unclear.
- Raluca was great. Hanzhe was not very helpful with questions and did not present material well. Martin was very smart and could be helpful when he wanted to be, but also got fed up with students very easily.
- Raluca, Hanzhe, and Martin were all really friendly but somewhat disorganized. I would have liked to receive assignments back in a more timely manner, and to have had solutions posted for the last few problem sets.
- Raluca, Hanzhe, and Martin were great--they held my attention during their lectures.
- All three TAs presented very clear lectures. I only went to Raluca's office hours, and she was very helpful with problems.

- The TA's were frequently unable to render satisfactory answers to questions, and often seemed to have done problems wrong or, at the very least, defended their proposed solutions weakly. I would have like to see the TAs be more decisive and confident with the material, and convey that while answering questions. However, the TA-given class lectures on specific topics, in particular matching, at the end of the course were quite engaging. I think this was largely because these lectures seemed more urgent and focused.
- Raluca and Martin were friendly and usually helpful. However, the way they ran our weekly problem sessions seemed inefficient. (This pertained more to those run by Raluca) Personally, I found the problem sessions for this class to be a complete waste of time. Every single week while go over solutions to homework problems, a student would persistently ask theoretical questions about problems--which were albeit pertinent to him and technically good questions--which would subsequently confuse or distract the TAs from continuing to explain the solutions. It's difficult to gauge how many others in the class found these questions personally insightful, but it seemed to be very few, and often we never even arrived upon an answer to his questions, nor to the actual solutions for a majority of the homework problems.
- The teaching assistants were overall pretty good. I never really interacted with them but they seemed nice and competent.

What, if anything, what would you change about this course and why?

- It needs to be more mathematical or at least more rigorous. I learned a lot more from Jehle and Reny from their careful exposition of proofs than I did during most of lecture, problem session, or problem sets.
- Get better TAs and constrain specific students, please.
- Make the class conceptually more challenging, and make the definitions clearer (especially towards the second half of the course). Get a better textbook: I have no problem with making us learn parts of the material on our own, but please assign a better book than Osborne to do it.
- Increase the mathematical difficulty/rigor
- Better structure/organization, but otherwise it was great!
- Speed up the lecture pace so that we spent more time on the later chapters (extensive form games with/without perfect information)
- Perhaps try to speed up some of the lectures to get a better coverage of the material. The rather sudden increase in difficulty in the material following mixed strategy Nash equilibria can probably also be better anticipated.
- Make it more rigorous. The course started great and then really stalled. By the end, we were just drawing pictures instead of actually applying math to game theory
- I would accelerate the pace of the course. Everyone in the room knew what mixed strategy nash equilibrium was from day one. I would propose accelerating the pace of the lectures, perhaps doubling it, and addressing more mathematically difficult material. Talking more about matching and bargaining (and addressing models/ algorithms other than Gale-Shapley) would be cool.
- Restructure the TA sessions. It would have been nice to have a problem session to aid in the completion of the homework or to clear up some questions about the material, especially since we rarely covered much ground while going over solutions in our normal problem sessions.
- Maybe the bargaining experiment could have gone better.

Is there any topic in this course that you wished you had had previous background in?

- No.
- Not really.
- No
- Game theory in general
- Nope.
- no background required...nearly everything was presented at a basic level
- Not really.
- No.
- I wish I had taken the accelerated analysis sequence (which is a recommended prereq.) in place of the regular analysis sequence.
- None

Which texts were most useful?

- Jehle and Reny is a fantastic book.
- Osborne's a fantastic text for explaining the material and Jehle/Reny went into wonderful depth for the formalising of the work in Osborne. Excellent pairing.
- Jehle and Reny was often helpful
- Osborne, Jehle and Reny were both very useful
- Osborne was pretty good, but the terminology was a little convoluted.
- I liked the TA's notes and the academic papers. Osborne's readability/level of interest for me was monotonically decreasing. Kreps was good, J&R were extraordinary but only supplementarily so.
- Osborne - An Introduction to Game Theory. Well-written and worked well with the class.

- We used Osborne, which is good enough, but tends to substitute precision and general techniques in favor of prose and particular examples.
- The Jehle & Reny posted on Chalk, along with the instructor's notes posted on Chalk, were most helpful.
- Osborne was useful because 1/3 to 1/2 of our homework assignments were problems from the textbook. It also presented the material at an introductory level, although proofs were often more convoluted than they need to be. J&R was useful for more mathematically advanced parts of the course.
- Osbourne

Which least?

- Osborne is probably good for an introductory level game theory book if you're in high school or a somewhat precocious middle schooler. However, the way it presents material is not rigorous enough and frustratingly slow.
- None, they were all good.
- N/A
- all were useful
- Osborne felt entirely unnecessary, except as a source of exercises. Even then, the instructor composed exercises were uniformly more challenging and interesting.
- the online version of Osbourne that was missing chapter 11

How productive was class discussion?

- There was no real class discussion aside from Professor Sonnenschein calling on people on occasion.
- Not at all. The TAs would often present incorrect answers on the board, or get mired in trivial questions from the two really smart math kids in the class. They were unhelpful in explaining the homework and discussion section would instead be about some esoteric point on one of the problems. I love going to discussion sections and, yet, often I would find myself bored or, worse, leaving early, just because I was getting nothing out of the section.
- Very productive
- Very productive - people asked good questions.
- Sonnenschein would often cold-call on students to make sure they were paying attention.
- Quite.
- Not terribly. Pretty much the only class and problem session discussion that occurred was the instructor's response to some particularly obtuse and technical question, always asked by the same student. None of the questions was ever given a satisfactory response, and the questioner never seemed to realize he wasn't going to get one. (This student was not me).
- It was fairly productive. Prof. Sonnenschein would often call on people in class, and was very adamant about wanting students to challenge him if they saw an error or disagreed with a point he made. There was never the colloquial "cold-calling" fear that can sometimes exist, as it seemed everyone present was interested in the material being covered.
- N/A

How has this course contributed to your education?

- I really enjoyed the course, and it gave me new insights on how to think about strategic situations especially when broadly applied to microeconomic theory.
- It's a very interesting topic and I'm glad I took the class - I had been looking forward to it since first year, but it was disappointing compared to how I wished it would have gone.
- Taught me how to model logic problems in mathematical form
- i now view many situations as a strategic game in which i find myself a player
- I now know about how game theory can be used to model real-world interactions, and how to solve the model.
- I've learned about the formal axiomatic foundations of game theory, and about game theoretic models / algorithms for auctions and matching. I would like to learn more about both subjects.

Why did you take this course?

Core requirement	0 / 0%
Instructor Reputation	6 / 40%
Faculty member recommended it	1 / 7%
Concentration Requirement	0 / 0%

Meets at a convenient time	0 / 0%
A student recommended it	0 / 0%
Topic interests me	0 / 0%
Concentration elective	0 / 0%

In summary, I had a strong desire to take this course

Strongly Agree	9 / 60%
Agree	5 / 33%
Neutral	0 / 0%
Disagree	0 / 0%
Strongly Disagree	0 / 0%

How many hours per week did you spend on this course?

Low Answer	3
Average Answer	8.6
High Answer	22

What proportion of classes did you attend?

All	8 / 53%
75%	6 / 40%
50%	1 / 7%
25%	0 / 0%
None	0 / 0%

Were the time demands of this course reasonable?

Yes	15 / 100%
No	0 / 0%

The Instructor

	N/A	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Organized the course clearly.	0%	0%	0%	13%	60%	27%
Presented clear lectures.	0%	0%	13%	27%	33%	27%
Held my attention and made this course interesting.	0%	7%	7%	20%	27%	40%

Stimulated and facilitated questions and discussions.	0%	0%	7%	13%	27%	53%
Responded well to student questions.	0%	0%	0%	7%	20%	73%
Was available outside of class.	20%	0%	7%	13%	20%	40%
Was helpful during office hours.	60%	0%	0%	0%	20%	20%
Motivated independent thinking.	7%	0%	0%	7%	27%	60%

The Readings

	N/A	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Fulfilled the objective of the course.	7%	0%	0%	13%	40%	40%
Were reasonable in number.	7%	0%	0%	0%	27%	60%
Were appropriately difficult.	7%	0%	7%	0%	20%	67%

Approximately how much of the reading did you do?

	N/A	None	25%	50%	75%	100%
	0%	7%	0%	0%	47%	33%

The Assignments

	N/A	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
How helpful were the lectures and discussions in preparing for exams and completing assignments?	0%	0%	0%	13%	53%	33%
How appropriately were the requirements of the course proportioned to course goals?	0%	0%	0%	0%	67%	27%
How well did the requirements contribute to the goals of the course?	0%	0%	0%	0%	73%	27%
How timely and useful was feedback on assignments and exams?	0%	0%	7%	27%	40%	27%
How fairly were the assignments graded?	0%	7%	7%	7%	47%	33%

Overall

	N/A	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
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This course met my expectations.	0%	7%	0%	33%	27%	33%
This course provided me with new insight and knowledge.	0%	0%	7%	7%	40%	47%
This course provided me with useful skills.	0%	0%	7%	7%	60%	27%
The content of this course was presented at an appropriate level.	0%	0%	0%	13%	33%	53%
I put my best effort into this course.	0%	0%	7%	20%	20%	53%
The class had a high level of morale/enthusiasm.	0%	0%	7%	20%	40%	33%

The Teaching Assistant(s)

	N/A	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Were available outside of class.	13%	0%	7%	0%	33%	40%
Were helpful with assignments.	13%	7%	7%	20%	33%	20%

Discussion Sections, Problem Sessions, Writing Tutorials

	N/A	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Were well coordinated with this course and contributed to it.	7%	0%	27%	27%	27%	13%
Provided well-designed materials.	13%	13%	20%	27%	20%	7%