

College Course Evaluations

ECON 20110: Elements of Economic Analysis 2: HONORS

Section 01 - Autumn 2012

Instructor(s): Weyl Glen

Number Enrolled: 25

Number of Responses: 16

Evaluation Comments

What were the instructor's strengths? Weaknesses?

- This class is extremely well run and incredibly organized. The readings are very relevant to class and the lectures follow very closely with the topics and exams. Sometimes the professor would move a little fast through pretty complicated math topics expecting us to easily follow
- Glen is incredibly smart, presented clear lectures, and really gave us the intuition necessary to think outside of the standard economic analysis. This made the class more interesting and more useful than just plugging in numbers to a math equation. However, the class (and especially some of the math) was sometimes too tough for me to understand, although Glen provided multiple explanations. Glen was also very available outside of class
- Prof. Weyl is extremely knowledgeable and really knows his material. However, it was frustrating at times to try to understand the material he was trying to present when we clearly did not have all of the right mathematical tools in place.
- Glen Weyl is clearly very intelligent and made a diligent effort to make class appropriately difficult and insightful/useful. However, I often got the impression that the class was often left confused after some of the more mathematically intensive lectures or problems
- Glen Weyl is a genius and a great lecturer to boot, a rarity in academia. No weaknesses.
- Glen was an amazing professor. His lectures were great and definitely gave me some new perspectives and ways of thinking about the world. The problem sets were also very interesting and great learning experiences. He also took time to connect with students outside of class
- He was clearly intelligent, but he was very intimidating. I didn't ever really want to talk to him because I was scared about how he would react.
- Professor Weyl skims over the basic microeconomics and dedicates the majority of the time to its practical applications. Most of the lectures, the problem sets and the exams are based on applied microeconomics, sometimes abstract and sometimes with real data. He certainly provides his students with an excellent view of what microeconomics can be used to do and how one might go about using it. Prof. Weyl also discusses policy implications quite often in his lectures. His political opinions (judging from what he said, they are largely based on economic considerations) are clear, and he is not afraid to share them. His justifications for his analysis are quite clear and logical. He sometimes may examine his politico-economic analysis by other disciplines in the social sciences, but does not go into detail - as is fitting in an economics class. As a last bonus, he films his lectures. It's possible (but likely not efficient) to watch them if you somehow missed a class. Admittedly, though, those are certainly not what the course description says on what the class is going to be about. Furthermore, the time commitment needed to do well in this class is huge (but not impossibly huge.) Inadvisable if you have to take a few non-easy electives in the same quarter.
- Glen Weyl is definitely an interesting instructor, he will really make you understand how complex econ problems are in reality (much more interesting than a basic micro class). Personally, I did not really appreciate the cold calls, it supposed to make students participate but I think that it is just the best way to make you freak out and lose your means.
- Incredible lecturer, ultra intelligent and genuinely excited to teach us a subject that he clearly loves. One of the best profs I have had here: definitely up there with Lima and other all-stars of the undergrad econ department as far as teaching ability and understanding of economics.
- Glen Weyl changed the way I look at the world.
- Glen is a young, bright academic who really has a passion for what he teaches. He approaches the ECON 201 course with that same passion, and really engages his students either via insightful material or course rigour. That being said, he seems to thrive both on his reputation as a difficult professor and his unique class structure. Though his assignments had an appropriate amount of rigorous material in it (and are much easier than those from the year before), they did not seem to have a focus, and often relied perhaps too much on people knowing HIS opinions from suggested solutions and not their own. His lectures were also very structured, and circled around cold calling and getting out his bullets (not giving student questions a lot of credibility). However, he was very patient with people who could not immediately understand the math and concepts. Overall, I felt he was a fair instructor with a high ceiling, but still could improve.
- He is very good at demonstrating the extent to which economic generalizations are really much more nuanced. He is perhaps not so good at describing precisely what those nuances are, which is mostly a time constraint: I often found myself realizing what he meant 5 slides ago.
- Glen is a great lecturer.

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

- The TA was fair. The TA sessions were almost useless, but some of the course notes that he posted on the website were pretty helpful.
- Hanzhe was good at going through old problems and answering some of our more math-intensive questions. He sometimes went too quickly
- Overall good TA. Got things back rather speedily and was always available outside of class.

- Hanzhe was often unclear and unhelpful, and seemed to have more of a mathematical background than an economic one and so often was more confusing than necessary
- N/A
- Hanzhe was a great TA. He was understandably busy with many TA responsibilities but he was willing to meet outside of OHs, and was also generous with grading the psets
- Very dedicated, very good at math.
- N/A
- N/A
- Hanzhe is brilliant, but not yet a good teacher.
- Hanzhe was readily available a lot of the time, especially prior to problem set due dates. However, because he was more fluent in quantitative than qualitative approaches, he wasn't exactly as helpful with some of the very qualitative HW questions. When asked a tough question, he sometimes was not as good at answering them. He was TAing two other classes, too, which seemed to distract his attention a little. Overall, though, he was good - just not great.
- He was good at explaining the mathematics behind solutions or notes that our teacher had posted, but he was not so good at teaching us methods to solve these equations more generally. Ideally he would have assigned problems which introduced us to the statistics and forced us to engage with the math.
- I went to half of the first ta session, but hanze didn't seem very good at explaining anything

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

- I feel this course could have been spread over an entire year and we still would have just scratched the surface of some of the topics that we talked about in class.
- Some of the class was too difficult for me to understand, but the challenge was appreciated. It might've been nice to go over those parts in discussion section more
- Either grade the problem sets easier or make it more quantitative. The abundance of qualitative questions is frustrating because you end up losing points for not thinking exactly like what is expected. Either make it so that those questions are given more leniency or make it so that problem sets require more math and deriving economic formulas (but make it easier than the math that is already in the problem sets or at least split it up into easier sections to give people a chance at figuring it out).
- I wish the course had been graded on a bit of a fairer curve considering most of the students in the class would have been in the top 25% of a regular Econ section.
- I don't like how it was taped. It made me feel like I couldn't ask questions, or else it would disrupt the lecture. Also, I wish the instructor was more accessible (not time-wise, but personality-wise).
- It is still notably more difficult than the other honors class in the sequence. We might need some way to further differentiate this (although Prof. Weyl has already done this once with his new class.) This class also requires skills in microeconomics that is supposed to be taught, but is actually simply taken for granted in class. Perhaps a warning on this implicit requirement might be needed. As a side note, the difficulty of this class has already been decreased once, and is probably not going any lower (he explicitly said that selecting the best students was his goal in designing the high difficulty of the class.)
- suppress cold calls, go a bit slower in the difficult mathematical parts (redistribution lecture for example) and correct the typos in the slides!
- I wish we had readings apart from the course notes (which were very helpful and interesting) to help understand the basic mathematical mechanics behind some of the complex models discussed.
- I didn't like how Glen posted the slides beforehand. Because he cold-called so much in lecture, many students read the slides beforehand purely to get ready to answer readily with the answers from the slides (e.g. memorizing derivatives or integrals). This was slightly annoying, as they didn't contribute anything to the classroom discussion.
- There should have been substantially more collaboration between the TA and the professor with respect to teaching the students the mathematics which would be relevant for exams. Essentially, the only way to learn how to do the difficult mathematics which appeared on exams and homeworks was to independently study past problem sets and mathematics, whereas that is to some extent the point of having a TA.
- none

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

- A better math background and a better understanding of statistics.
- A better understanding of some math concepts (multivariable calculus, Leibnitz's Rule) would have been nice. It is also good to know a little bit about the economic research that is going on right now. Also, it is useful to have a knowledge of current events, especially in the tech industry
- Differential equations. Random microeconomic theory.
- Statistics and more differential calculus
- Nope.
- Calculus, statistics
- More practice in basic microeconomics.
- statistics
- none

- No - it was good! The class introduces a lot of different concepts in various aspects of life (anything from COIN campaigns to ethnic heterogeneity), and will incorporate a lot of economic approaches. This was very impressive.
- Statistics, and maybe political science and history though not because they were necessary but because they would have made these results more interesting.

Which texts were most useful?

- the course notes that the professor and TA posted online. They helped explain some of the most complicated topics.
- We did a lot of readings from Varian, but it wasn't really all that useful. The slides and readings that were posted were the most useful.
- None.
- Varian
- Glen weyls notes.
- Lecture slides were most helpful and relevant to what we needed to know
- Varian - somewhat, for the basics.
- glen's teaching notes
- All assigned texts were very helpful. The course notes especially.
- Victor Lima's note, though not required, were a good complement to understanding the math if you so desired. Glen's own course notes really honed in on specific topics, are good.
- Most of the articles assigned were very useful. The course notes that Professor Weyl himself wrote were extremely useful and enlightening.
- course notes, lecture slides

Which least?

- Varian
- All.
- Varian
- Everything else
- N/A
- Non
- -
- Hal Varian, per usual, isn't very good.
- Perhaps the corporate merger guidelines, but I read them anyways and they were interesting.
- varian

How productive was class discussion?

- Class discussion was very productive. The teacher would randomly ask people questions.
- At times it felt not very productive because I had already reviewed the slides before class so I knew the information that would be presented already, but having it taught to me always made it clearer, so I made a point to go to class
- There wasn't much actual discussion so much as answering questions. Overall, it was just like a normal lecture class in that discussions are usually not that intellectually engaging.
- Cold calling helped make discussion good.
- There wasn't really any, he just asked questions and we answered them.
- Only somewhat, since Mr. Zhang did not speak a lot and few questions were posed.
- good even if students oftenly make useless comments, as participation is graded.
- Very
- Not very, given that most people just memorized answers from the slides. Sometimes Glen's dismissive answers to student question also deterred students from asking clarifying questions.
- There wasn't very much class discussion.
- not much discussion in classroom. discussion in office hour was very productive

How has this course contributed to your education?

- it has forced me to question the assumptions that economics makes and to learn to properly approach problems.
- This class has been essential for me in expanding my ability to look at real world situations and apply economic analysis to them. More importantly, Glen taught us to look at the standard analysis more closely and come up with our own theories.
- It has helped me to seriously evaluate my life goals.
- Best course at UChicago so far. Taught me how to think like an economist. Glen Weyl's approach of stressing creativity in economics paid off a lot.
- I am still frazzled by this course. I'm sure I think differently now, but I don't know if it was worth it.
- Very useful for understanding the practical applications of microeconomics.
- a lot, it made me understand what doing econ really is!
- This class imparted economic intuition, an incredible amount of new knowledge, powerful mathematical tools to discuss interesting real world phenomena and a renewed interest in economics.
- This was a very great course - much better than the typical Chicago/Lagrangean ECON 201.
- It has rendered my opinions on economics in particular and the world in general much, much more nuanced. I look forward to applying the lessons and approaches from this class to virtually any aspect of my life in the future.

Why did you take this course?

Core requirement	0 / 0%
Instructor Reputation	13 / 81%
Faculty member recommended it	1 / 6%
Concentration Requirement	13 / 81%
Meets at a convenient time	3 / 19%
A student recommended it	6 / 38%
Topic interests me	10 / 63%
Concentration elective	0 / 0%

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

Strongly Agree	3 / 19%
Agree	8 / 50%
Neutral	1 / 6%
Disagree	1 / 6%
Strongly Disagree	0 / 0%

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

Low Answer	7
Average Answer	13.7
High Answer	25

What proportion of classes did you attend?

All	14 / 88%
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75%	2 / 13%
50%	0 / 0%
25%	0 / 0%
None	0 / 0%

Were the time demands of this course reasonable?

Yes	14 / 88%
No	2 / 13%

The Instructor

	N/A	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Organized the course clearly.	0%	0%	0%	6%	25%	69%
Presented clear lectures.	0%	0%	0%	13%	50%	38%
Held my attention and made this course interesting.	0%	0%	6%	6%	31%	56%
Stimulated and facilitated questions and discussions.	0%	0%	13%	13%	19%	56%
Responded well to student questions.	0%	0%	6%	6%	13%	75%
Was available outside of class.	0%	0%	6%	6%	31%	56%
Was helpful during office hours.	13%	6%	0%	0%	25%	56%
Motivated independent thinking.	0%	0%	0%	0%	25%	75%

The Readings

	N/A	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Fulfilled the objective of the course.	0%	13%	6%	6%	25%	50%
Were reasonable in number.	0%	0%	13%	13%	19%	56%
Were appropriately difficult.	0%	6%	13%	0%	31%	44%

Approximately how much of the reading did you do?

	N/A	None	25%	50%	75%	100%
	0%	6%	0%	0%	56%	13%

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%	6%	13%	31%	50%
How appropriately were the requirements of the course proportioned to course goals?	0%	0%	6%	6%	56%	31%
How well did the requirements contribute to the goals of the course?	0%	0%	6%	6%	38%	50%
How timely and useful was feedback on assignments and exams?	0%	6%	0%	19%	31%	44%
How fairly were the assignments graded?	0%	0%	6%	13%	38%	44%

Overall

	N/A	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
This course met my expectations.	0%	0%	13%	0%	44%	44%
This course provided me with new insight and knowledge.	0%	0%	6%	6%	6%	81%
This course provided me with useful skills.	0%	0%	13%	6%	19%	63%
The content of this course was presented at an appropriate level.	0%	0%	13%	13%	31%	44%
I put my best effort into this course.	0%	0%	6%	19%	25%	50%
The class had a high level of morale/enthusiasm.	0%	6%	6%	6%	38%	44%

The Teaching Assistant(s)

	N/A	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Were available outside of class.	6%	0%	0%	13%	38%	38%
Were helpful with assignments.	6%	0%	25%	13%	31%	19%

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.	19%	6%	19%	25%	19%	6%

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Provided well-designed materials.	19%	6%	19%	13%	25%	13%
